





# THE TUTORIAL IS TOO HARD

BOOK 02

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EPUB CREATION BY LISA HAYES

# The Tutorial is Too Hard

(튜토리얼이 너무 어렵다)

by

Gandara

# Synopsis

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On a normal boring day.

A message appears, inviting him to a Tutorial.

A tale about Lee Ho Jae and his escape from Tutorial.

Who just happened to choose the hardest possible difficulty, Hell.

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# Chapter 101 - Tutorial 16th Floor (9)

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“Now... Wait, Mr. Apostle! You are wrong! That’s not it!”

I raised my hammer again. The Knight stepped back and shouted, “I’m not the one! Really!”

“What is?”

“I am the one who said first that there is a doppelganger here, but that’s just because I saw it first. Why are you raising the hammer?”

Ah, so you did see the doppelganger? I lowered my hand that held the Transmutable Thousand Arms and asked him to explain.

“All right. Explain in detail.”

Instead of asking a bunch of questions, it is probably going to be easier understand if I just let the Knight talk freely.

Anchor

“We all entered this dungeon room at almost the same time. I found the doppelganger that was sleeping in the center. When the doppelganger was approaching us, the trap was activated and trapped us here.”

“You said someone was attacked in the darkness and the doppelganger took on the skin of that person. In that case, it does not make sense to claim that I must have been in this place in hiding all along, don’t you think? You said you saw what the doppelganger looks like, didn’t you?”

“Yes, I did. We thought one of us attacked by the doppelganger in the darkness. However, we thought of a new possibility earlier.”

A new possibility...

What is this theory accusing me of being the doppelganger?

“The doppelganger must have changed its form in the darkness. Instead of attacking the new people who just entered and assuming

one of the people's form, it changed to a form that it had from the past."

Um... I think that is plausible.

The message didn't say anything about anyone being attacked by the doppelganger.

It just says that the doppelganger hid in chaos.

There were so many pathways. When many people entered the dungeon room at the same time, the place fell to darkness.

In that brief moment of darkness, instead of taking on the risk of attacking someone, the doppelganger just assumed an old form that it already knew.

That makes a complete picture.

"Is that possible? When I asked you about the doppelganger earlier, you didn't say anything about such an ability."

"It is very rare, but there are records of doppelgangers doing such a thing. The records are not very credible, but... Actually there are so few records about doppelgangers, so..."

Um...

This is also a plausible theory.

It's not a perfect proof that I am the doppelganger, but I cannot think of any loopholes for me to point out.

"All right. Well then, what were you guys going to do if I am the doppelganger? If you really thought I was the doppelganger, then you should have ambushed me instead of just slowly walking up to me together."

"About that... We thought you must be not a doppelganger."

Now what is this all about?

"My head is starting to hurt. Hurry up and explain. Make it brief."

“Actually, you were suspicious from the start. So, we attacked you without hesitation on the first day. However, the end result was our defeat. Also, instead of killing us and torturing information out of us, you kept us alive and wanted to hear our stories instead. On top of this, you didn’t even ask about information that were important or must be kept from the doppelganger. Also, for the past few days, your behaviors and decisions were far from a demon, so...”

“Make it brief.”

“... A long time ago, the doppelganger attacked you and hid itself in you. However, it failed in taking over your consciousness completely. That is our theory.”

Yet another unexpected idea popped out.

The doppelganger stole my body, but failed at taking over my consciousness.

I thought about the meaning of this.

“Explain in detail from there.”

“Yes. So, we thought the doppelganger snuck in this dungeon and was slowly eliminating your consciousness. Unless that was the case, there is no way that a doppelganger would be sleeping in a corner of this dungeon where the greatest treasure of the millennium is supposedly hidden. Also, this dungeon is not even related to demons. The doppelganger must have brought up your appearance in the moment of danger. Because the doppelganger had not completely took over your consciousness, your consciousness that was chained by the doppelganger until now surfaced. That’s our conjecture.”

So in other words, both my own consciousness and the doppelganger’s consciousness are within me.

“Actually, when we asked about your past, you didn’t answer and just went over it with gave us a nonchalant response. You didn’t



tell us anything about recent history or the distant past.”

I get why you find it suspicious, although that’s because I am not related to this world at all.

“So, we came up with yet another theory. You must have lost your memory! The doppelganger had been erasing your memories gradually to completely remove your consciousness. If that is the case, that would explain why you don’t know anything about the outside world. You are not completely ignorant of all common knowledge. You only know some things as if you have holes in your knowledge. The theory explains these as well. You won’t know very well about how you got here, where this place is or what the outside world is. What do you think of our theory!”

Like an anime character, the Knight raised his index finger to the heavens and shouted in energetic roar.

After that, it seemed he felt a pain in his side. He held his waist and winced.

“By the way, can something like that happen? A doppelganger taking its time to possess someone’s body because it is not able to eradicate the original’s consciousness, the original person’s consciousness surfacing when the doppelganger uses the form while being in that state, and, the original person not even recognizing the doppelganger’s consciousness in the body.”

“... Possible... It is possible.”

The Holy Knight who was quivering in the corner answered for me.

“I have not heard of such a case, but the Holy Knight said it was possible. You are no ordinary person. You are being called by a God. You are very powerful as well, so I think it would be possible for you to not lose your mind completely and hold on. The doppelganger can also hide inside an unaware host. It already succeeded in attacking, and it took the body as a host. As for the

host's consciousness, it is losing memories, so if it is unaware of it, then it is possible for the doppelganger to stay hidden in the body. After all, a doppelganger is a high demon. I am not sure about these, but..."

"So... Kuluk... Couldn't you go easy on us? My lung is not working well. I think my spine is broken somewhere as well. So... We assumed that the theory is correct and tried to force the demon out of your body. Even if our theory was wrong, we figured it won't lead to serious problems. Also, if we were right, then we would have been able to save you as well. Of course, it would be hard to recover your lost memories... Anyway, we thought it was the most plausible idea. Also, nobody had to die in this scenario, so it was the most ideal theory."

It was the most ridiculous idea.

The problem was that this dumbfounding theory might actually be correct.

So far, whenever I entered a stage, there were bits of information about my role in each message that described the clearing goal.

The 'myself' in these stages had unique roles that fit the themes of each stage. It was like a videogame character.

After that, the challenger continued to clear of the stage, assuming that role of a main character in a videogame.

It had always been like that.

At the Sixth Floor, I was a brave warrior. At the Seventh Floor, I was a guardian. At the 11th Floor, I was a tracker. At the 12th and 13th Floor, I was a challenger.

In that case, what is my role at the 16th Floor?

The message didn't define my character in this stage.

The message only told me about the people who arrived at the dungeon room and the doppelganger.

There was nothing about me in the description.

The theory is plausible if I also think about the difficulty of the stage.

Let's think about the difficulty of the 16th Floor.

If I am the doppelganger, I'll end up killing all of the people here in my search for the doppelganger by the seventh day before the rescue party arrives.

However, the doppelganger will not reveal itself.

I'll fail the stage if the rescue party arrives then.

If I realize that I am the doppelganger at the very last moment, but do not know how to draw it out, then I'll fail to clear the stage.

Let's assume I somehow managed to draw out the doppelganger.

Then I will have to defeat the doppelganger.

All by myself.

I am certain the doppelganger will be a tough opponent for an ordinary challenger to face alone.

The challenger must get help from the group to make challenging it easier. However, the group will still be wary of the challenger, who they suspect of being the doppelganger. They won't theorize about the possibility of extracting the doppelganger hidden inside.

Considering the floor level, it is a fitting difficulty.

"So, I'll ask. Do you really not remember your past? If you do remember your past, then our theory is wrong. Please answer honestly."

"... Wait. Let me think a little harder."

First, I brought out potions and told them to treat the others who were still on the ground.

I think my brain will start to cramp soon.

As I thought, this is not my kind of work.

Instead of agonizing over this complicated issue, I opened the message window instead.

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: Can you get some information for me right away?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I can get you one before today's evening and another one tomorrow or the day after that. What is it?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: Gather information about a demon named Doppelganger. In particular, how it attacks people and how it takes over the victim's mind; how to identify the doppelganger and its combat abilities; and if it is possible to identify the doppelganger if the doppelganger had not completely taken over the body and the host's consciousness had surfaced at the moment. If there is enough information allowance left after all those, send me other frivolous information like its tendencies.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: I got it. Now that I think about it, I think this is the first time for you to ask us to gather information directly like this.]

I'm going to use a cheat key.

The Order of Vigilance had been providing information for the few rankers at higher floors to help them with their stage clears.

To be exact, the information came from the managers of the Tutorials, and the Order broadcasted the information.

The easy difficulty challengers at lower floors gather information by asking the requested questions to the managers when they clear floors.

They didn't really need much information to clear the lower floors in the easy difficulty. Even if they needed information, they could get them for free from the Order, so this arrangement worked out fairly well. Also, they were given small rewards after

each round.

The Order had been managing the information gathering system by making a list of lower floor challengers' projected clearing days and information requests.

I should take advantage of their information system.

I have done a lot for the Order all this time.

If I don't use this now, when am I going to?

I closed my eyes for about 30 minutes and waited for Kim Min-hyuk's response.

The people at the dungeon were mumbling to each other, wondering if I was meditating and trying to see if the doppelganger was inside me.

Also, they were saying that the situation was unfolding just as they theorized.

They were talking about my self-reevaluation because I heard their theory.

The group, other than the Mage who was still unconscious, were glad for a moment that they got the right answer. They were also relieved. However, they readied themselves for another battle.

It seemed they were preparing themselves because they thought the doppelganger might rush out in middle of my meditation.

I was not actually meditating. However, it was not like I could tell them I was gathering information by contacting someone outside of the stage. I let them have the benefit of the doubt.

When 30 minutes passed, Kim Min-hyuk messaged me.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Doppelganger is a very rare demon, so the information was very expensive. The informant got the information by focusing only on the important parts and making it as terse as possible. First, I'll tell you exactly what the manager of the Tutorial said.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: All right.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: Doppelganger. A demon. Uses claws and tentacles to neutralize the opponent and make the opponent lose consciousness. Connects a tentacle to the brain of the subject and gains information through brainwaves. Afterwards, it destroys the subject's soul. The manager didn't explain how the doppelganger destroys the soul. Next is... A doppelganger completely neutralizes the host and becomes a soul to take over the host's body. Because it is in a soul form directly attached to the host's body, it is sensitive to the pain experienced by the host. Therefore, to find the doppelganger, the host must be killed or subjected to an almost-fatal level of pain.]

There is one more information left that's important.

[Lee Ho-jae, 16th Floor: How about when the host who had not been taken over completely reveals himself? What did the manager say?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30th Floor: The manager said identifying the doppelganger is still possible in that state.]

After reading his reply, I sat there vacantly for a moment.

This is incredible.

The theories proposed by the group were all correct.

They were theories that would have been difficult to come up with, even in ordinary situations.

If we just tried to find and eradicate the doppelganger amongst the group, could we have come to this conclusion?

I don't think we could have.

This is the most unusual conclusion that they arrived at. It is like selecting a series of hidden choices correctly despite a selection of more than a dozen decisions that needed to be made consecutively to get to the final destination in a video game.

It had been five days since I entered the 16th Floor stage.

We had been laughing, eating, drinking, learning and teaching.

I don't know how the group felt about this, but I greatly enjoyed my time here.

Also, they thought I might be a doppelganger although my true consciousness probably isn't.

After that, they thought of this theory.

I'm a little overwhelmed by their caring thoughts. Despite their suspicious about me being a doppelganger, they came up with an alternative where I was still not the demon.

Am I being too sentimental?

I met people for the first time in a Tutorial stage.

Spending comforting times like this with people goes beyond simple joy and comfort. The time has a special meaning to me.

It's been over a year since I entered the Tutorial.

Most of the time I spent here are filled with pain and loneliness.

After that, all I had left was obsession and a sense of accomplishment.

Of course, I grew stronger through the hardship. I was able to find myself as I advanced.

Still, the past year had been extremely hard.

That must be why I treasured the time I spent with everyone. It was small and simple, but it was very enjoyable.

Perhaps I'm overreacting.

I slowly opened my eyes.

I saw the Mercenary's face. His eyes were black and blue.

I thought I gave him a plenty of potion. It seemed that it wasn't enough.

I feel sorry all of the sudden...

I thought that perhaps the past five days were not as fun for the group as it had been for me.

Tsk...

I swallowed my guilt and organized my thought for the last time.

I was actually still not certain if I was the doppelganger.

Given the situation, many things fit theory. However, they were not definite.

However, I should examine this as the people concluded.

Their theory could really be correct.

According to Kim Min-hyuk's message, a doppelganger is sensitive to the host's pain.

The message said that the host needs to be killed or reach a near-fatal state.

In that case, there is only one option left.

“By any chance, is there anyone here who is good at torture?”

This person will have to be really good at it.



## Chapter 102 - Tutorial 16th Floor (10)

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I can say this because I'm an expert in pain endurance. A near-death level of pain really means a degree of pain that could cause death from shock.

This meant the pain had to be of the most extreme kind, not the silly kind like bumping one's toe at the door and feigning severe pain while rolling on the ground in mock agony.

Also, near-death kind of pain could be induced only by skillful and detailed practitioners trained to harass the subject's body.

I knew about the method better than anyone.

However, from the experience, I knew how frightening my self-harm would look to the others.

So, instead of doing it myself, I asked the group to torture me instead.

Maybe I would be able to learn a new method of torture.

Now...

I cannot hide my disappointment.

"Ah, is that not hurting you?"

"... I told you to do it harder. I won't hit you back. I won't. You are doing it because I asked you, so why are you so scared?"

While shaking, the Adventurer was trying to pull the nail out of my finger. I told him he didn't need to worry about me hitting back. It seemed he was concerned I might get angry at him later for hurting me. He was probably worried that I might let out my frustration at him by attacking him later.

At the moment, I was sitting at a chair that I brought out of the inventory. I had my left arm tied to the chair's arm rest.

Sitting in front of me, the Adventurer was fiddling with my

hand.

Others were finding it difficult to watch, so they stood a little further away from me.

I told him he could hurt me at will. The Adventurer took a deep breath and started to pull the nails out of my fingers.

Ugh...

It doesn't hurt so much if you pull the nail out so cleanly in one swing.

You should do it slowly in a mess with twists. Only then is the raw sensation of a nail being pulled out can be felt.

I didn't know it would go this way. I might as well do this myself.

Still, the Adventurer knew the basics of the torture.

Before him, the Holy Knight brought out a punishing hammer or whatnot, which was the size of a little hammer used by a judge, and beat my wrist with it as if he was playing a game of whack-a-mole. Compared to him, Adventurer was doing a lot better.

After pulling out my nail, it seemed he gained a little confidence in this. He brought out sharp metal tool and tongs.

They didn't appear to be for medical purpose. Instead... they appeared to be tools for opening a safe.

The Adventurer cut open the top of the finger where the nail was pulled. He put in the tong there and messed with my flesh inside for a while.

“Are you really... not feeling pain from this? How could you not even flinch? Do you have a problem in your nervous system...”

Normally, if someone was just enduring the pain, their elbows, legs, spine or toes would be wildly trembling if their finger's flesh being dug out like this.

However, the pain resistance's effect erased such secondary

pains. It was because they could be hindrances to battle.

Of course, the pain itself was not erased at all.

Actually, because of the effect, my senses never became paralyzed from pain, so I could feel the pain more clearly.

I told the Adventurer to continue. I told him everything was going well.

It seemed the Adventurer was determined. He brought out a black wire from the bag.

He cut a segment from it to a short length and stuck it on top of the finger that he just cut open.

He carefully adjusted the location of the wire and called the mage who was watching in the back with a pale face.

“Refuse.”

[Are you asking me to use Blitz magic at that wire? Are you out of your mind?]

Why not? I think it is a great idea.

The Mage panicked apprehensively and hesitated. However, I explained that I consented to the Adventurer. I insisted. Thinking it could not be helped, the Mage stepped in.

“That is a special wire that will amplify the power of the Blitz magic. Adjust your power accordingly.”

It seemed the Mage was having a difficult time looking at my hand which was cut open with a wire stuck in it. After hearing the Adventurer’s explanation, she grimaced and used a magic spell.

“Lightning Shock.”

She used a Blitz magic at the wire. My hand and arm flinched from the shock. Electrifying sensation flowed through my nerve and went all the way to my spine.

It smelled like burning flesh. I felt being stabbed by needles and

compressed by a crusher. The pain was not just on my finger. It was on my elbow and riding all the way up to beyond my shoulder.

It even reached the tip of my head. I felt like I was being slapped to my senses.

I had experienced Blitz magic before.

During the day of great harmony last time, I had asked Lee Jun-suk to use Blitz magic on me so I could raise my Blitz and great magic resistance.

I didn't get to earn Blitz resistance in the end, but...

Anyway, compared to that last time, I don't think this was much more efficient.

I was about to ask if there was any other torture method. It was at that moment when I could hear a quiet scream.

[... Uuuu... Kuuuuuuuu... St.... Stop... What... are you... doing...]

Is this the doppelganger's voice?

It was not coming from my ears. It felt like the voice was echoing in my head.

The voice sounded like one of those distorted voices of criminals in a movie. It was muddling and unpleasant to hear.

"I think this is effective. Try making it a little stronger."

[You... insane... human...]

"Lightning Bolt!"

This time, not just the parts around the arm, but my entire body shook violently.

For about half a second, my vision suddenly went white before slowly returning to normal.

As I thought, the Mage's Blitz magic spells are more powerful than Lee Jun-suk's.

[Kuuuuaaaa... This... This fool! Are you planning to die together!]

Who's going to die with you?

I won't die from something like this.

I pressed in the wire deeper into my finger and said,

“Another shot. Make it a more powerful spell.”

The Mage hesitated for a moment before reciting the spell, and the doppelganger screamed.

[Kuuuuaaaa! How could such a dumbass... How... What kind of God is... trying to have this lunatic as the Apostle!]

Why are you treating me as if I'm insane?

You are spoiling my mood.

[God of Adventure is agreeing with you.]

The Mage brought out a paper, wrote on it and showed the paper to me.

[I'll shoot a really powerful one. You are going to be okay, right?]

I nodded decisively. The mage also nodded. She took a step back and started to recite the spell.

Considering that she had to recite a long spell, I was certain that this one was going to be a lot more powerful than the ones before.

[S... Stop. Are you intending to die too...]

The doppelganger kept on hissing at me to quit. However, I ignored him.

Meanwhile, the Mage, who had no way of hearing the doppelganger's whispers, finished her spell and cast it.

[You lunatic!]

“Lightning Strike!”

Right after that, I lost consciousness.

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I checked my surroundings as soon as I regained my consciousness.

I am safe.

I checked the time. About two minutes had passed.

It seemed I fainted for two minutes.

Two minutes...

I had faint resistance, yet I was unconscious for two minutes. That meant it was a huge shock, something that would have left me unconsciousness for a very long time if I didn't have the skill.

The Blitz spells that the Mage used before this one were strong, but they were not as powerful as this.

I did ask her to use a more powerful spell. However, compared to the spell before this, the last spell was at least twice as powerful.

If it was not me, anyone else would have definitely been dead or on the verge of death. The magic spell clearly had beyond deadly power.

Um... Was it a simple mistake?

I should ask later.

I untied the rope that was tying my left arm to the chair's armrest. I opened the inventory to bring out a potion and drank it.

It looks like I won't have to worry about the aftermath of the damage.

I got up and tried moving my body.

I feel light.

I brought out both Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory. I made one form a straight long sword and the other one into a shield. I looked to the front.

There was a bizarre looking monster.

It was about three meters tall with twelve tentacles on each arm, which were very unique.

Also, the face didn't have eyes, nose, mouth or ears.

The tentacles on its shoulder constantly changed its length.

The tentacles' tips had sharp claws on them. The doppelganger's body and tentacles were thrashing around violently. Unlike their sluggish movements, they were very sturdy.

Kang!

I also could see the people fighting the monster.

The Knight's sword was blocked by one of the tentacles. Another tentacle came at the Knight, and he quickly retreated to avoid it.

The people were covered in dirt and blood. It seemed like they were being pushed back a little, but they were holding out pretty well.

The doppelganger must have left my body when I lost consciousness and started fighting the group.

I was probably defenseless while I was unconscious, yet I didn't have any injuries. I think the group must have started attacking the doppelganger as soon as it came out and put distance between me and the monster.

I'm thankful.

As of late, I've been too easily overcome by gratitude.

I became too sentimental.

[Talaria's Wings]

I summoned Talaria's Wings to enhance the combat strength of the comrades around me.

I stepped in right after.

“Hey. Were you guys able to hold out?”

“Does it look like we are all right? If you were just a little late, one or two of us would have died.”

The Mercenary complained. His forehead was gushing out blood.

The man sure love to complain a lot.

“Fortunately, the Holy Knight used a holy spell as soon as the doppelganger showed itself and dealt a great damage to it. Right after that, the doppelganger disengaged its spirit form and quickly manifested its physical form to enter combat. We fought hard, but the Holy Knight and the Mage were running low on mana, so we had been holding out by just the three of us. We still need a bit of time before the Holy Knight and the Mage could recover enough mana. I’m glad you woke up just in time!”

As always, the Knight was one magnificent obsessive compulsive explanation patient.

[PR Note: At first I thought he was referring to everyone as a regular noun but it turns out it’s a proper noun \*sigh\* so I’m sorry everyone. I’ll try to change it ASAP. By that I mean I’ll beg Jaiki to.]

J response: nope :D

As for the Adventurer who was holding his stomach that was struck by the doppelganger... Um... I just don’t like that man’s face.

Sheepishly, the Holy Knight and the Mage waved their hands at me before closing their eyes again to focus on recovering mana.

Now that I think about it, other than with Idy, is this the first time for me to fight with allies?

I think this is also the first time for me to receive assistance in the combat situation.

I had participated in the Tournament’s group rounds, but I never



fought along with the group members during that event.

I rushed forward and blocked a tentacle that was swung at the Mercenary.

Toooong

A heavy shock along with the sound from the impact echoed in the dungeon room.

As I thought, those tentacles are moving with flexibility, but they were clearly durable.

With my gaze, I told the Mercenary to step back and said,

“Everyone, you held on well until now. I’ll finish this.”

There was the matter of the experience points, and I also found it easier to finish things by myself.

The three who had been holding the front line retreated. Having confirmed this, I charged in immediately.

The tentacles came at me at all directions.

[Battle Focus]

I calmly examined the trajectories of the tentacles.

They were swung like whips, so I had to be very cautious about predicting their trajectories.

Considering my speed, there were three tentacles that were going to get in my way.

I could block one with my shield and keep on advancing. However, I have to fight off the other two.

My mana flowed into the long sword and I continued to charge in.

After that, when the tentacles came within my attack range, I calmly swung my long sword.

I swung my sword at each tentacle, one at a time.

The tentacles were as tough as iron. However, they were cleanly severed by my longsword.

From the left side, a tentacle was trying to hinder my advance. I blocked it with my shield and continued on.

The other nine tentacles won't be able to trip me off.

I smoothly made my way to the doppelganger. It was within melee range. I swung my sword horizontally just below its featureless face, right at its neck.

Suuuuguk...

Like that, the doppelganger's head was cut. Green blood cascaded out like a water fountain.

The blood could be poisonous or acidic, so I jumped back to avoid it.

While I was jumping back, I changed the long sword's form into a dagger.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms had a constant weight regardless of the shape, so the dagger had considerable mass concentrated on it.

As soon as I landed, I threw the dagger at the doppelganger.

Kwang!

The dagger pierced the doppelganger and nailed it to the wall.

The doppelganger was trying to use its tentacles to pull out the dagger. However, it seemed to have difficulty pulling it out.

Oh ho ho... How sad. You don't have any hands.

Although I swung at its neck, its head was not cut off completely.

Watching the doppelganger, I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms on my left hand.

First, I formed it into a straight sword.

No, this is not right.

After a few trials and errors, I formed a great sword similar to the one held by the Knight.

I held the great sword with both of my hands and applied mana by following what I learned from the Knight.

It was like this, right?

The sword started to resonate with a sound. It started to shine in blue light. In normal circumstances, pouring in enough mana into a weapon until my mana became visible like this meant that sword had an excess of mana. It would have resulted in unacceptable amount of waste in mana.

However, when I tried it using the method that the Knight taught, the mana excess was significantly reduced.

The mana was shining steadily. It gradually formed a shape and fluctuated around the surface of the sword.

It looked cool.

I know that sounds simple, but what else would I call cool if I don't call this cool?

A sword of light has a mysterious magical power that compels the heart of a man. Although this one actually does have mana in it.

The scene was like something out of anime.

When the mana flowing inside the sword reached its maximum output, I clenched the great sword and took a stance.

After that...

“Ex...”

Inside my head, another me was urging me to not to say anything embarrassing. However, my split romanticism personality didn't stop me from saying the rest.

“...caliber!”

With all of my might, I swung the great sword. Afterwards, the reaction from the mana was so powerful that even I, the one who just swung the sword, had a hard time withstanding the shock. Along with wind like noise, the dungeon room was engulfed in blue light.

\*

“Just where do you plan to use that? Just kill it quickly. That thing is a demon. If you are not up to it for some reason, then I’ll end it with a holy spell.”

No, I can’t let you kill it. I won’t get the experience points.

I was holding the doppelganger’s head on my hand. The Holy Knight looked at it and nagged me.

The doppelganger only had its head left, which lacked all facial features such as eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. However, the doppelganger was still alive.

“I was wondering if I could get information out of this bastard.”

“... No! Were you listening to what I have been telling you? That thing is a demon. What do you plan to do with information about demons and hell? It is dangerous, so you should stop!”

Is that something you should oppose so strongly?

I made an excuse by saying I want to learn about my past from the doppelganger.

After that, the Holy Knight allowed me to continue without much opposition.

“Now, why don’t you say something, demon.”

However, the doppelganger didn’t say anything.

The doppelganger was sensitive to pain, so I thought it would be easy to make it talk.

However, it never spoke, even when all of its tentacles and body

were cut off.

“This is odd. Isn’t this bastard supposed to be weak against pain?”

“That’s probably only when it is in its spirit form and being a parasite in the host’s body. When it is in its physical form, it is no different from being in a combat form. It probably won’t respond to physical pain.”

“Physical form is its combat form? Wouldn’t its spirit form be more powerful?”

“No, that’s usually not the case. In the spirit form, it does not have the protective power of a physical form, so it becomes much weaker against attacks that use mana. It’s substantially damaged when it is subjected to attacks like a holy spell that directly deals damage to the spirit. Of course, the spell that attacks the soul is the doppelganger’s weakness. Anyway, because of that, when the doppelganger is fighting while not being inside a host, it turns into its physical form like this. I am not certain, but according to what’s been known, that’s how it is.”

Thank you for the magnificent explanation.

An attack that affects soul.

Would the soul steal work?

This is a power skill as well, so it could be considered a holy spell.

Let’s try it.

“Soul Steal.”

Until now, the doppelganger’s head had been quiet. As soon as I used the soul steal, the head started to cry in pain.

[Kuuuaaaa... God of Death! God of Death... Are you an Apostle of the God of Death...]

What? God of Death?

Was it the God of Death that gifted me with Soul Steal?

Before I could think more about this, I could hear a sharp scream from behind me.

“Kuuuaaaaak!”

I quickly turned to look. The mage coughed out blood and started to collapse.

What is this now?

# Chapter 103 - Tutorial 16th Floor (11)

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“Kuuuuuaaaak!”

I saw the Mage collapsing to the floor as she coughed out blood. My mind felt numb.

Again? Why is she like that all of the sudden?

I pondered about it for a moment and disengaged the soul steal.

I paused for a second, before using soul steal again.

“Soul Steal.”

[Kuuuu... Stop...]

“Ke... Kek...”

I could hear the screams from both the head of the doppelganger in my hand and the Mage who was convulsing on the ground. That complicated the situation even more..

Before this, I had thought about the possibility of there being more than one doppelganger.

After defeating a doppelganger, we would waste time relaxing and waiting for the rescue party to arrive. After the rescue party arrives, I would fail to clear the stage because of the hidden doppelganger.

However, the fact that I was the doppelganger was a pretty mind-boggling trick in the stage already. Also, to think that there was yet another twist with there being more than one doppelganger...

As I thought, this is the Hell difficulty.

It seemed the architect was going to have a problem somewhere if the stage was easy. There was always trouble to the very end.

There was not just one doppelganger in the dungeon room. There were two.

One of them was the bastard that was hiding inside my body. The

other one was the bastard that was twitching on the floor over there under the guise of the Mage's appearance.

“What's happening?”

“Why is the Mage acting like this?”

After the battle, the Holy Knight and the Knight were resting, but they came to me and asked.

I explained to them that I used the soul steal to weaken the doppelganger and the Mage started to experience pain because of it.

“Um... As I thought, the Mage was also a doppelganger? Mr. Apostle, I'm sorry, but could you disengage that spell for a moment and use it again later?”

As the Knight asked, I disengaged the soul steal for a moment and started it back up again.

When the soul steal was canceled, the Mage gasped for air and breathed desperately for air. When I started the soul steal again, she was screaming in pain.

“... Oh no...”

It seemed the Holy Knight was very disappointed. He faltered and covered his face with his hands.

Was it that shocking?

“Well, I am not all that surprised that the Mage turned out to be a doppelganger. I thought the Mage was a doppelganger from the start.”

The Mercenary was here too before I realized and added a knowing statement.

As the Mercenary said, the Mage had done many things that made her a suspect for a doppelganger.

In multiple instances, she tried to use magic that was going to



harm other people.

Moreover, she was seriously affected by the soul steal and had lost consciousness for three days.

When I was unaware of how much effect the soul steal had on the doppelganger, I simply thought it was because her mana ran out of control.

Now that I think about it, she was unconscious despite the Holy Knight's healing. I wonder if the Holy Knight's healing negatively impacted the doppelganger because of his holy power.

Lastly, she used a very powerful Blitz spell that was enough to make me faint.

Back then, I wondered if she made a mistake. However, now that I see her shuddering around on the floor, I am certain that she did it to kill me.

The doppelganger that was hiding inside my body also yelled and said, 'Are you intending to die too.'

Looks like I could have died.

I was too complacent.

Other than the Holy Knight, everyone stared at the Mage as if they were suspicious of her the entire time.

I was the same.

Watching the Mage in pain, instead of feeling pity, I just thought, 'As I thought, she was the doppelganger.'

Honestly, that Blitz magic earlier was obviously too powerful.

Anyway, this was like a cow walking back and accidentally killing a rat.

I didn't know that doppelgangers could be identified with this method.

Soul steal only affected the 'enemies' around me.

Because of this, when I used the soul steal on the first day, the doppelganger inside me was completely unharmed by the spell.

I was not even aware of the doppelganger inside me, so...

The doppelganger inside me probably view me as an enemy.

It probably saw me as just a host.

That means the doppelganger over there which assumed the form of the Mage was regarding me as an enemy all this time.

Well, I guess that is obvious?

In the beginning, I told everyone that I was going to find the doppelganger and kill it alone even if it meant killing everyone else in the process. That doppelganger probably thought it had to kill me somehow if it wants to leave the dungeon alive.

“Do you think the two doppelgangers knew about each other? I wonder if they could communicate with each other. I don’t think this is the case, considering that the doppelganger who assumed the form of the Mage had constantly tried to attack you. Maybe they formed an agreement that just one of them leaving the dungeon alive was good enough. Hut! Mr. Apostle, looks like that doppelganger won’t be able to stand this any longer. I think it will reveal its true form soon. Do you still have strength left for another battle?”

The Knight had been observing the Mage’s condition. The Knight asked me.

Do I have strength left?

Of course.

“Kuuuu... Kuuuk.”

The Mage’s scream turned menacing. Her arms and legs were cracking and creaking. It was about to reveal its true form.

The Holy Knight on the side started to recite a spell. I urged him to stop. I told him there was no need for him to overexert himself

when he didn't even recover his mana yet.

In most situations, giving the time for the monster to transform was not a good idea.

However, in this situation, I was confident that I could beat the doppelganger even if I fought it ten times consecutively.

Since that was the case, it was better for me to let it finish the transformation so I could get more experience points.

I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms' dagger form into the long sword form again and concentrated.

There was no way I was going to taste defeat when victory was already guaranteed.

\*

"Hey, Mr. Apostle... It's time for you to get up... Huh? Were you already awake?"

It seemed that it was my turn to keep watch. I was lying down with my eyes shut but the Mercenary interrupted me.

"I just got up. I thought it was my turn to keep watch, so..."

"Haaaaaaaam... I'll go to sleep now. You have done a lot today during the battles, yet you ended up with the watch duty at the most inconvenient time, so it must be tiring for you. Keep up the good work."

It seemed the Mercenary was very tired. He mumbled and stopped talking as he reached his spot and laid down.

As for me, regardless of exhaustion, I always had a hard time falling asleep.

When I was in the middle of a stage, I usually stayed up for days. I took naps at the Kiri Kiri's field after clearing a stage or at the waiting room.

Standing watch was not all that tiring, considering that I've been

doing this for fifteen floors now.

I was not intending to sleep anyway.

On the contrary, I was actually anxiously waiting for my turn.

During today evening, I wrapped my sword with the Holy Knight's holy spell and defeated a doppelganger.

Of the doppelganger that assumed the form of the Mage and the doppelganger that was in my body, the doppelganger that was in my body was dead.

I wanted to ask all sorts of things to that doppelganger under the pretext of wanting to know about my past. However, it was not able to answer anything.

It was not that it refused to answer. It was not able to answer.

The reaction was similar to when I asked Idy things related to the Tutorial, so I am certain of this.

The doppelganger was not able to tell me anything about the past of the character that I was currently playing as in the 16th Floor's stage.

I could understand why it couldn't answer since this was related to the Tutorial.

However, the doppelganger couldn't give me any information about the demons or hell either.

I think I should check out this problem later.

We didn't kill the other doppelganger that was pretending to be the Mage.

The Holy Knight had been suffering from dehydration since the evening due to excessive use of mana, so we decided to postpone using another holy spell.

I could destroy the doppelganger by continuing to use soul steal, but there was no reason to do that.

So, we left just the doppelganger's head and trapped it inside the mana-restraining box that the Adventurer had. Since then, we had been taking turns to keep watch on it.

Now, it was early morning. Everyone was asleep, and it was finally my turn to keep watch.

In other words, only the doppelganger and I were awake.

I walked around and confirmed that everyone really was asleep before heading to a corner of the dungeon room.

I quietly opened the mana restraint box.

Although it was still alive, only its head remained.

[Kuuu...]

“Quiet. Now, listen very carefully to what I’m about to say. Depending on how well you do, I’ll decide how painfully you should die or if I should give you a chance to escape this place alive.”

The doppelganger moved the skin on its face to acknowledge my threat without making any noise.

“Tell me about hell and the demons.”

Of course, it was not able to explain them.

“Strike one. You lost one chance. If you disappoint me two more times, you will die right now. I won’t wait until the morning.”

[Ah... That wasn’t on purpose...]

“Just shut up. Don’t make loud noises.”

Actually, it didn’t matter if you made noises or not.

If the Holy Knight woke up because of loud noise, then he will complain that I’m listening to stories from a demon, but that was it.

Also, they had an intense battle against a doppelganger today, so they would be in deep sleep.

The doppelganger was not able to give me information about hell or the demons.

I couldn't ask it about the human world outside the dungeon either.

What would be the point of asking it something it didn't know?

I only had one thing left to ask.

The Mage's memories and knowledge.

It even taught me magic under the guise of the Mage, so it should not have any problem teaching me magic.

Actually, the situation now is better than before.

The doppelganger wouldn't be acting like a mute and write everything to communicate anymore. It is also not bound by the restrictions of the Magic Tower either.

Ugh, I'm getting infuriated all of the sudden.

"Soul Steal."

[Kek... Why... Why? Stop...]

"You little bastard. You are just a doppelganger, yet you tried to hide information about the Magic Tower or whatnot as the excuse? You brainless runt. What do you have to do with the Magic Tower? Also, why can't you talk? ... Now that I think about it, you are so infuriating. I cannot stand it."

I was well aware that doppelganger wouldn't sustain much pain from a physical strike, but just to quench my anger, I pressed my knuckle onto its forehead.

I did it with middle finger up and my hand wrapped in mana. My knuckle had a substantial amount of force behind it.

The doppelganger was already exposed to the soul steal. It seemed that getting hit by an attack that was wrapped in mana was quite painful. It started to make cracking noise.

[Please... Uk! Uk... I'll tell you want you want. I will tell you... So stop...]

The doppelganger pleaded, so I canceled the soul steal and said,  
“That was strike two. You only have one chance left. If you disappoint me one more time, you will die right here.”

[I feel so wronged... No. I was wrong. I'll tell you anything you want...]

“I don't need you to speak anymore. Can you write with this?”

I brought out a pencil from the inventory and asked.

[W... Write? You want me to write?]

“Huh? You can't? If you cannot write, then tell me. It's all right.”

It was not able to answer promptly. It momentarily fell silent.

It definitely is not dumb.

If it said it could not write, then that was going to guarantee three strikes.

If it still wanted to cling on to life, then it had to write somehow.

[I can write...]

After the response, the doppelganger's facial expression twitched. On the side of its face, the flesh expanded a little and it became a wrinkly hand-like form that was the size of a hand of a newborn baby.

As I thought, it could transform.

Before going to sleep, the Holy Knight said the doppelganger probably still have enough strength left to transform its body.

So, he said that we should take turns to watch it even if it is trapped in the box.

So far so good. It's going just as planned.

“Now, write with that pencil, do you understand? I won't have to

tell you what you need to write about, right? It's about magic. Write all information you have in your brain about magic. You got it?"

[... Excuse me. In that luggage, there are magic books that the Mage used to carry. Why don't you take them instead...]

"Shut up. Are you going to talk back to me? Do you want to die or are you going to write as I told you to?"

[I'll write.]

As the doppelganger said, there were magic books in the Mage's bag.

However, what use would I have with such books?

I couldn't even take those books to outside of this stage.

So, I had to copy the content onto papers I prepared before coming into the stage.

However, I don't even know their written language, so how am I supposed to copy all that word for word?

On top of that, do all that before the 16th Floor stage ends?

It was obvious. There was no way for me to get it done.

So, this was why I was asking the doppelganger to do it.

Kuuuu. It is such a logical and fitting choice.

[Where... Where am I supposed to write them?]

All right. This is very good.

Having heard the doppelganger, I opened the inventory and brought out gigantic notebooks that had been lying in the corner of my inventory.

They were notebooks I was going to send to the Order of Vigilance as supporting items.

Each notebook had over a thousand pages. I had 15 of these thick



notebooks.

So, the total number of pages were over fifteen thousand.

Also, the pages were A2 size.

“Now, from now on and before the morning comes, fill these notebooks with information until there is no room to spare. You can do it, right?”

[...]

“If you fill them properly, I’ll not kill you. I’ll let you live.”

[Really... Are you really going to let me live?]

“That’s right, so hurry up and start.”

The doppelganger fell silent again. It seemed to have realized that it had no other choice. Soon, it started to move the pencil and write on the notebook.

It was like a computer printer.

The pencil movement was incredibly, even mesmerizingly fast.

It had been a while since I ate a beef jerky. I brought some out from the inventory and chewed on it while watching the doppelganger write.

I watched it so it won’t do anything else or try to trick me. I didn’t forget to say something occasionally at it either.

“Don’t write again what you already wrote.”

“Don’t go gradually increasing the size of the letters over time either.”

“Minimize the spacing.”

“Don’t do double spacing.”

“When it comes to plots or figures, making it readable is enough.”

“I will say this again. If you write something you already had

written already, you will die.”

“You will die also if you write it in crappy handwriting. Write it in neat handwriting so it’s comprehensible.”

I was reciting the lines I heard from my main teacher from the middle school days for a surprise homework. I used the lines to whip the doppelganger into shape.

The Adventurer and the Knight were the people who were supposed to be the next watches after me. However, I didn’t wake them, so the doppelganger could write until seven in the morning, which was the time for everyone to wake up.

The doppelganger was only given a few hours, but in that short period of time, it managed to fill 13 notebooks with words with little room to spare.

Its writing speed was ridiculous. However, in the end, it couldn’t fill all 15 notebooks.

“That’s too bad, but you failed your objective.”

[Wait. Wait! This was impossible from the start due to the time constraint...]

“Now, go back to the box.”

I placed the doppelganger’s head inside the mana restraint box, locked it and closed the lid.

It was time for me to wake everyone and eat.

I’ll make it write the rest after the breakfast.

Like that, I faced daybreak in the sixth day of the stage.

\*

After the breakfast, as usual, it was time for the Knight’s chatterboxing.

The man always talked a lot, but now that the threat of unidentified doppelganger was no more, it felt like the Knight had

grown even more talkative.

Others were very relaxed as well.

They had been spending time anxiously all this time. With the problem finally solved, it seemed their hearts were feeling light. They laughed and talked easily.

Now, we just needed to wait patiently until the rescue party arrived, so the group even took off their armors and changed to comfortable clothes.

Of the group, we no longer had the Mage with us. However, the Mage was probably ambushed and killed when we were trapped here on the very first day.

Instead of being shocked by it or being saddened by it now, they calmly recognized it.

With the Holy Knight leading the ceremony, they held a prayer. We decided to deliver her belongings to the people of the Magic Tower. That was all.

After the meal, I threatened the doppelganger and made it record information into the notebooks again. I was watching it from the distance, but the Holy Knight came next to me.

Through the morning, everyone was taking it easy. However, Holy Knight looked very uncomfortable.

It seemed he was agonizing over something. He kept on sighing through the morning.

He suddenly came next to me, so I wondered what this was about.

The Holy Knight suddenly sat down next to me as if he was plummeting down a trap.

“If you have time, will you please listen to me for a while?”

## Chapter 104 - Tutorial 16th Floor (12)

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It was a bit out of the blue, but the Holy Knight just sat down next to me and started to talk.

In summary, what he told me was like this.

While he was treating the Mage, its face changed to a woman's face.

Also, the face had striking resemblance to his daughter who died ten years ago.

He was shocked, and didn't tell anyone about this. However, he confided to me that he couldn't make proper decisions since then due to the chaos in his mind.

He was saying that he was not certain if this was just a coincidence or if this was the doppelganger's trick to expose a weakness in his heart.

"Should we check? That bastard listens well when threatened."

I pointed at the doppelganger who was diligently writing away on the notebook under my observation.

"It's fine. What would be the point now? It is meaningless. What's more important is that you almost died because of me. I would like to apologize again."

He said he couldn't stop the mage from using the Blitz magic on me because he had been letting his guard down.

The Holy Knight was well versed in magic. He should have stopped the Mage from completing the spell as soon as he heard the incantation. However, he didn't and was beating himself up over this.

This old man has too strong a sense of responsibility, needlessly so.

Actually, that incident was my fault. It was because I was

complacent with the stage, not because of Holy Knight.

In the end, that incident with the Mage's Blitz magic didn't screw things up royally, so I told him to not worry about it.

With the threat of the doppelgangers now completely dead, the atmosphere inside the dungeon room was surprisingly brighter.

I was also relieved by the fact that the problems were handled correctly. I was apologetic about the fact that I beat up the group needlessly, so I was even nicer to the group.

"Really? As soon as we leave this dungeon will come to our guilds with us?"

"Yes. I'll be the witness to your exploit of defeating two doppelgangers inside the dungeon."

"Ohoh! With an amazing exploit like this, I might even be able to snatch up the position of a local manager!"

I told the Adventurer and the Mercenary that I would go with them to their guilds and serve as a witness to what happened in the dungeon after leaving this place. They were very happy to hear my proposition.

These middle-aged men were in shambles, but they were breaking into joyous laughter. They looked happy, and unbecoming of their ages.

Of course, I was never going to be able to visit their guilds.

After seven days pass, the stage will be cleared, and I'll be leaving this place.

However, what harm was there in saying that I would go?

It was not like it was going to cause a problem.

I had no reason not to say it, but I also had no reason to hold back.

After the Adventurer and the Mercenary, it was the Knight's

turn.

I asked the Knight while eating a sandwich for lunch.

“As you already know, I lost my memories. I don’t have a place to go or stay. How about the kingdom that you belong to?”

“Are you planning on staying at the kingdom? In that case, please come with me. Someone of your skill will be greatly welcomed by the castle. You should not have any difficulty in obtaining a title either. Moreover, recently the monarchs have been...”

Through the meal, the Knight explained all sorts of advantages I would have for belonging in the kingdom.

His explanation did not end even after he finished his meal. He told me all sorts of interesting things about the kingdom.

He even told me the rumors about the king’s personality and sexual preferences.

“Isn’t it dangerous to have such information spread?”

“Come on. Everyone who could know already knows.”

How could such a thing be so widespread? I don’t think this kingdom is all that normal?

I suddenly became certain this knight must have made some critical contribution to the spread of the rumor.

Will you be all right?

The stories went tangent and even reached the beautiful and mysterious natural wonders of the kingdom.

“It is said that there are summon spirits living in this lake. I have never been to the lake myself, but I heard it from other people.”

The knight explained famous tourist destination spots and even promised to go there with me in the future.

He sure liked people and loved chattering away even more.

After lunch, as I planned, I asked the Knight,

“It’s about the technique I used yesterday.”

“Ah, you mean that Ix... Caliber, like that?”

No, you need to give it the right accent.

“Anyway, when I used that technique, I feel like there was something missing in the instruction you told me. It is just a guess, but I’m right, aren’t I?”

The technique that the Knight told me was supposed to allow me to pour in mana into a weapon efficiently and easily.

When I used the technique during the battle against the doppelganger, I felt an unfamiliar sensation. Something was not quite right.

The sensation was completely different from how I used to layer weapons with mana using my old method.

When I layered the weapon with mana using the method that he explained, I felt like I was lifting a heavy barrel full of water.

It felt like the mana was going to spill out immediately.

At that moment, I mimicked the Knight’s move and swung the sword.

When the Knight used the move on me before, he came close to me and swung his sword, and I felt like I could not just move away from that spot.

In the end, I had no choice but to stand there and swing my own sword against his.

Also, unlike how the Knight did it, during the battle against the doppelganger, the mana in my sword was shot toward the doppelganger from a distance.

Completely by accident, I found a side application of the technique. Still, I could not help but to think there must be another step to the technique.

At the very end of trying out the technique, I was not able to figure out how to maintain the mana that was poured into the weapon. In the end, unlike how the Knight did it, I was not able to sustain it.

Instead, I swung the sword and shot the mana forward because the mana was not fixed onto the sword.

That was my theory.

“Yes. The technique you used was unstable. Actually, I didn’t even know that mana could be launched from the sword like that as if it was a magic spell. Also, I didn’t know it could generate such power either. It was probably because you poured in incredible amount of mana into the sword. It may also be a result of your proficiency in handling mana. Still, the technique was not meant to be used that way.”

“Um. That’s what I felt. I’m asking because of that. Can you please tell me the next step?”

The Knight hesitated and agonized over the thought of revealing his technique for a long.

That’s expected. Even this talkative man won’t be able to just teach an outsider such a high-level technique.

“From what I heard from you about the kingdom, I think it would be best for me to start a new life there. We will be a family soon, so why bother hiding it?”

That was not all that convincing.

Ordinary people would not have accepted it.

They would have refused and told me that I could learn it after obtaining the qualifications.

“I really should not be telling you this, but...”

It was as planned.

I baited him so heavily already. There was no way this chatterbox



was going to keep his mouth shut.

Like that, another session of the Knight's passionate lecturing began.

It started right after lunch, and his lecture continued beyond the dinner time. It went on until it was time to sleep.

Before long, the Mercenary and the Adventurer, and even the Holy Knight, joined us and focused on listening to the man's lecture.

The Knight was very focused on the lecture. He didn't care about keeping secrets anymore.

I felt sorry for the kingdom's knights.

I wonder how hard it would be for them to keep this blabbermouth knight in check.

The Knight is pretty skilled on top of this, so they probably cannot even treat him carelessly.

Of course, I was not going to stop the man's lecture just because of this reason.

His lecture was extremely valuable.

It was far more useful than the lecture on magic, which I couldn't comprehend very well.

I wish I could challenge the 16th Floor again and listen to more of the Knight's lectures.

I formed a great sword with the Transmutable Thousand Arms and poured in mana, following the Knight's instructions.

Soon, with resonating sound, blue mana manifested on the surface of the sword.

Just like what I had seen before, the mana was wavering.

It looked like dry ice sublimation.

Now, that I maintained the flow of the mana, I had to be careful

with the mana circuit's pathways in my body.

I connected the circuit to the mana that was layered on the weapon. While the mana circulates, I must make sure the connection is maintained.

This is to make sure the mana won't dissipate or pour out.

The key was maintaining this connection.

I raised my focus and maintained the flow of mana.

After about five minutes in, a small change occurred.

The fluctuating mana had calmed down.

Maintaining the connection also became easier.

I felt like I could maintain this state for a long time even if I directed my focus elsewhere.

It felt like a vein that I had never known about opened up. The connection suddenly felt so much easier to maintain and comfortable. I even felt like I was getting used to this.

Now, the oscillating mana on the sword came to almost complete halt. The manifestation of mana appeared to be almost fixed.

I thought it would be alright if I injected the sword with even more mana.

I was confident that I could maintain it.

I raised mana and poured in even more mana into the sword.

As I thought, I could successfully maintain it without problems.

The physical manifestation of mana on the sword now looked almost like a solid layer.

Mana was shining steadily like a layer of shining wax. Looking at the sword... It looks like an aura blade from a fantasy novel.

The Knight was watching me practice. I could hear him say,

"A... Aura? Aura Blade!?"

So, it really is an Aura Blade?

It could be that the actual name is something different.

The translation by the knowledge before the time of Babel must have chosen those words.

Like that, I tried swinging the sword.

The mana wasn't launched.

The mana was enough to obliterate even a doppelganger, a demon, in a single strike. Such a humongous amount of mana was condensed into the sword. It felt like I achieve something amazing.

I felt like I could cut anything by swinging the sword.

I retrieved my mana and put the sword away.

Again, I thought the Transmutable Thousand Arms was a great weapon.

Could I have accomplished an achievement like this in such a short amount of time if I tried with a different kind of weapon?

I don't think so.

Transmutable Thousand Arms didn't just transmit mana well. It felt like it was drawing mana on its own and amplifying it.

I could be imagining all this out of excitement.

"I never thought you would complete the Aura Blade in just one day... I wonder if you already knew the technique before you lost your memory because of the doppelganger. Unless that was the case, it would be impossible to master this so quickly."

There was no way for that to be true.

Anyhow, he is really buttering me up, so please go on.

"It looks like you're already guaranteed a place as a high nobility no matter where you go. Should I just quit being a mercenary and follow the Apostle..."

The Mercenary was mumbling at the corner. It seemed the ability to use the Aura Blade alone was proof of one's skill.

The Knight explained the usefulness of the Aura Blade.

Its effect went beyond just protecting the blade's edge and sharpening it with mana.

"So, you are saying I can cut mana with this?"

"Yes. Armors and weapons made with materials that contain mana, mana that's haphazardly wrapped on a weapon, seals or barriers made with magic and others... You can cut them all without much resistance. Of course, there will be differences depending on the user and the subject's abilities. Only another Aura Blade of equal level can stop an Aura Blade. I heard there are exceptions, but there are only a handful of them."

This is great.

Shooting unstable mana from a distance demonstrated incredible power.

However, considering my combat style, which took advantage of my speed and skills, I was certain that the Aura Blade was going to be far more useful.

I was a little surprised that my skill levels didn't increase from all these revelations.

I wondered if I would level up in mana circuit or obtain a new skill. However, nothing had changed in my status window.

Um...

Does this mean I was already at the height where I could have formed the Aura Blade even before I learned these methods from the Knight?

If this means I just never thought of the idea and didn't know the instructions but had the ability to perform the technique, then I can understand why my skill levels didn't go up. It is not so odd

then.

I think I should ask Kiri Kiri.

I organized my thoughts as I stood at a corner of the dungeon room and practiced using the Aura Blade.

Not just on the great sword, but I also tried the technique on other weapons and thought about how to make use of the technique.

The group watched me practice for a while before they eventually scattered to get sleep.

As for the doppelganger that finished writing, it was trapped in the box again. Since I do not sleep, I volunteered to watch it through the night.

\*

The final day of the 16th Floor stage arrived.

After finishing the breakfast, we completely destroyed the doppelganger that was trapped inside the box.

It finished tightly packing the 15 notebooks with writings. I had no more use for it, so I had no reason to keep it alive.

I felt somewhat jubilant after that. I was chatting with the people, but from the far end of the dungeon room, we could hear sounds from the wall that was blocked because the ceiling collapsed on the first day.

A small voice could be heard among the banging noises of the wall.

The group went right up to the wall and told the people on the other side about their current locations. Soon, we heard from the other side that they were the rescue party and they would be able to clear the walls soon.

The first rescue party to arrive were the people from the knights.

The Knight was overcome with tears because of the fact that his comrades came to rescue him.

“Aruhan! Are you all right? I hope nothing serious happened?”

“I’m all right! Actually, I was hurt, but I’m all right now! Nothing happened? Lots of incredible things happened. Listen to this, what happened was...”

The Knight was all excited and went on orating his story. It was obvious.

After ten minutes later, we could not see the end of the man’s story. We could hear the voice from the other side of the wall. The voice had frustration mixed in.

“Aruhan! I am sorry, but we are busy with cleaning up the rubbles of the ceiling. You are bothering us, so please just shut the hell up and wait.”

The Knight’s face was blooming with happiness because he was so glad to hear his comrades coming to rescue him. After being told to shut up, his face was filled with disappointment. He looked all gloomy. He crunched down at a corner and pouted.

As I thought, that was the kind of position he was in with his people.

The rescue party cleaned up the debris until they successfully entered the dungeon room a little past lunch time.

The group welcomed the rescue party.

The rescue party didn’t just have the knights. There were people who appeared to be from the Holy Temple. There were also people who appeared to be mercenaries, adventurers and mages. There were many of them in the mix.

I took a step back and watched their reunion, and a message appeared.

It was the clear message for the stage.

[You cleared the 16th Floor of the Tutorial in Hell difficulty.]

[All of your status abnormalities and wounds will be recovered.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for being the first one to clear the stage.]

[Many Gods are showing positive responses to you. 3500 additional points were acquired.]

[Many Gods are showing negative responses to you. 1100 points were deducted.]

[Additional reward will be given based on your play record.]

[You acquired Paralysis Resistance Lv.11.]

[Paralysis Resistance Lv.11 was combined to Paralysis Resistance Lv. 14.]

[You acquired Paralysis Resistance Lv.15]

Fortunately, there wasn't any final surprises like a third doppelganger. The 16th Floor stage was safely concluded like that.

I watched the group talking to the rescue party for a little longer and quietly muttered, "Teleport."

Somehow, I felt empty. I was going to miss this.

After a moment, my body left the dungeon room. I was teleported to bright, green field.

"Houuujaeeee! Houuuujaeeee! Hello~ Hello? Hello, Hello!!"

For some reason, Kiri Kiri looked tense. She hopped and hopped as she greeted me.

# Chapter 105 - Tutorial 17th Floor (1)

---

“Hello! Hello!”

Kiri Kiri had always been energetic, but she was especially energetic today.

She hopped and skipped around as I watched for a while. She actually started to dash into the distance like an actual rabbit.

I watched her for a moment. She had gone far enough that I could not hear her voice anymore.

Why is she acting like this again? She hasn't been like this for a long time.

Instead of raising my voice to call her, I opened the store and purchased a cream cake.

As I thought, Kiri Kiri immediately turned back and hopped towards me.

You knew the moment I purchased the cake from that distance.

You must have the incredible nose of a dog.

Before long, she managed to recover her distance traveled. Eyes, twinkling, she asked, “Can I eat it? Can I eat it too?!”

“Yes, eat it. I bought it for you.”

“Thanks!”

Excited, she rushed at the cake. I handed her a fork.

I knew this rascal was going to scoop out pieces bare-handed if she didn't have one.

“Why are you so excited today? Did something good happen?”

“Iiiiihiing. Yes, there was.”

She mumbled, stuffing herself with mouthfuls of cream.

It looks like something did happen.



This lass probably had been sitting around whole day at this field. What could have possibly happened that made her feel great?

Did someone else in Hell difficulty clear a stage and meet her?

I think I should send a message to Lee Hyung-jin later.

Did Lee Hyung-jin succeed in clearing the Fourth floor?

From what I've heard, he had been having a difficult time with the floor.

The Fourth Floor's mission was killing the Goblin King, who was at the center of the city surrounded by four fortresses. It was not going to be easy.

Lee Hyung-jin was an assassin, so it was not a bad mission for him, but there were so many enemies for him to deal with.

Kiri Kiri suddenly stopped eating cake, so I looked at her. It seemed she was rushing the cake, and now her neck was feeling choked.

I purchased a cup of coffee from the store and handed it to Kiri Kiri.

“Drink this and eat it slowly.”

“Hihing. Okay!”

She chugged the coffee like it was plain water.

After that...

“Uuuuuuk. It's bitter...”

It probably was. It was americano.

Kiri Kiri made a disgusted cringe and put down the cup of coffee.

She looked adorable and fun to watch, so I smiled inside.

I brought out a sugar cube and gave it to Kiri Kiri to put in the coffee.

Instead of putting the cube in the coffee, she just put the cube in

her mouth.

She was enjoying it. She smiled.

Could anyone like sweets so much...

\*

“Hiiiing. You will have to wait a while before you can read this.”

I showed her the book that I made the doppelganger copy, only to be greeted by those words.

Kiri Kiri looked at the book that was tightly filled with words and said, “There is a lot of great information here. They are summarized pretty well too. Still, there are so many things written in Rune. You won’t be able to understand it by patterns alone. Even if it was possible, it will take too long. It will be inefficient. You should learn Rune first, but you cannot purchase the textbook for Rune yet.”

“I cannot purchase it?”

“That’s right. You need to get to at least the 30th Floor before you can purchase it from the store.”

“There is a restriction like that? I never heard of such a thing from the challengers of other difficulties.”

“There are differences in not just the floor numbers, but also the difficulties. By the way, this is an expensive piece of information.”

That was an expensive piece of information?

Couldn’t you tell me that first before telling me the actual information?

Well, it is still good that she told me that after giving me the information.

Also, she probably told me because she thought the information would be useful to me.

Um...

I think I'll have to put off studying magic for a while.

I'll have to wait until I get to the 30th Floor or beyond at least.

"Ah, I learned a magic called Wind Arrow. I was not able to cast it completely. Can you tell me about that?"

"Yep... Wait. It is complicated."

Kiri Kiri thought deeply and asked right away,

"If I explain this to you, I won't be able to tell you about the Tournament."

Is that so?

There was going to be the second Tournament soon.

It was going to happen in the next Round, so there were only a few days left.

Obviously, the Order of Vigilance was gathering information about the next Tournament.

"It's all right."

However, the Order had already gathered quite a bit of information about the Tournament.

So, they were able to get information about the doppelganger for me as well.

"In that case, I'll tell you. I'll briefly tell you about it once, so listen carefully."

"I got it."

"Kum Kum."

Kiri Kiri calmed her throat and started to explain.

"What you need is understanding of elemental types and their applications. It is impossible to master them at your skill level. However, you can master the wind element. Wind Spirit's Blessing. That's the all the information I can give you."

So, in the end, she is advising me to improve my understanding of the wind element through the Wind Spirit's Blessing.

The information was probably brief and short because it was about a new technique; it was a magic skill, on top of that. She was probably restricted from telling me too much.

If I didn't have the Wind Spirit's Blessing, she probably couldn't even do that.

"Thanks."

"Hihiing. It's my job."

I opened the status window and checked the information about the Wind Spirit's Blessing.

[Wind Spirit's Blessing (Lv.5)]

Description: The Wind Spirit who just entered its childhood is with you.

Agility + 10

Stage One: You receive the blessing of the forest when you reach a certain speed.

Stage Two: You are further accelerated after you reach a certain speed.

Stage Three: The Wind Spirit is always with you. The Wind Spirit will cheer you on wholeheartedly when you are in danger.

The third stage of the skill, which used to be filled with question marks before, revealed its description now that I got to level five.

However, I didn't really care for these.

What would be the point of having the Wind Spirit, which was invisible to begin with, cheering me on?

"Kiri Kiri, it is not like there is a hidden effect in the Wind Spirit's cheering, right?"

"That's right. There is nothing. I told you this before. If I must

point out something, it is feeling better while watching an adorable spirit cheering for you.”

That’s right...

I had high hopes for the third stage of the skill, but I realized that it was meaningless. Since then, I had forgotten about the Wind Spirit’s Blessing skill.

The increase in agility and other boost effects were definitely effective. However, because it was a passive skill, I didn’t really need to actively think about the skill.

I had thought about the skill recently, when I obtained the Summon Spirit Assimilation skill.

[Summon Spirit Assimilation (Lv.2)]

Description: You will become a little closer with summon spirits.

Other than what it said in the description, there were no other effects from it.

Kiri Kiri told me the same thing about the skill.

However, what was the point of becoming close friends with Summon Spirits that I couldn’t even see?

I am not even sure how the skill increased to level two.

I had been forgetting about these skills like that. Now, they could be clues for using magic.

Whenever I use the Wind Spirit’s Blessing, the Wind Spirit will be around me, although I won’t be able to see it. Should I try to detect its energy and understand the elemental type through observing this energy?

Since the magic I’m trying to use is Wind Arrow, I think it definitely will help if I tried to “feel” the energy of the Wind Spirit.

I guess I could think of it as something like the holy power emanating from.

When the Holy Knight used holy spells, I didn't detect anything extraordinary from them.

However, at the 13th Floor, when the entire space had the God of Duel's power cast on it, I felt something similar to my power skills.

The Master Monk said it was the sensation of a holy power.

In other words, I could feel the holy power, but it had to be incredibly powerful, something from a god.

One day, once I get used to holy powers, I should be able to feel the traces of holy power from simple spells as well as from powerful ones.

So, like that, I should try to get used to the Wind Spirit's power and try to feel it.

If I magnify my focus and try to detect the energy around me, I should be able to feel something.

I concluded my thoughts and checked the time.

[Round 17, Day 24, 21:30]

I am not sure about the timing.

There are only a few days until the 30th day. That may or may not be enough time to challenge the 17th Floor. Meanwhile, I have too many days left to just stay at the waiting room and train.

Should I just set my mind to it and focus on training for the remainder of the time?

I thought profoundly about this, but Kiri Kiri poked at my arm.

"What is it?"

"Yes... I think it would be a good idea to challenge the 17th Floor right away."

Um...

Kiri Kiri rarely gave me an advice when I didn't ask.

Could there be a reason why I should try challenging it right away?

If the stage's challenge time is exactly five days or even shorter, then her advice would make sense.

However, if that was the case, then that is not something Kiri Kiri would voluntarily advise me on. It is not that important.

I thought about this for a while, but I couldn't think of anything.

"Why? Can you tell me the reason too?"

Kiri Kiri looked troubled. She shook her head.

"You don't have enough allowances for information now, so I cannot tell you."

I figured as much.

Usually, the information about the next stage is expensive, although it is not as expensive as information about the Gods or the Tutorial System.

"Using the remaining allowances, can you give me a simple clue?"

I probably don't have much allowances anyway. Let's use it to satisfy my curiosity.

Kiri Kiri still looked troubled, so I changed my phrasing and asked again.

"Is the reason something good for me or bad for me?"

I'm sure she can answer that.

However, unlike my expectation, Kiri Kiri's concerned look didn't relax.

She hesitated several times. She closed her eyes tightly and said, "It's on the good side. However, you won't like it very much."

I won't like it very much...

That's odd.

I usually don't like the contents of stages.

There were plenty of stages where I was told that I would clear them without problems.

However, even such stages contained grinding, unsanitary conditions and discomfort. I didn't like such stages.

So, there was nothing special about the fact that Kiri Kiri said I won't like the stage.

However, what I find odd is her attitude.

In the past, she had said in ways that hinted at the stage possibility being uncomfortable, tiring or bothersome. She never said outright that I would despise the stage. This was the first time.

"In that case... As you said, I'll try challenging it right away."

I will be able to know about it once I challenge it.

I organized my thought and said goodbye to Kiri Kiri.

"Well then, I'll be back, Kiri Kiri."

"All right."

With her brief words, Kiri Kiri saw me off.

Listening to her farewell, I was moved to the waiting room.

\*

I panicked after entering the waiting room.

I had never seen Kiri Kiri see me off in such a serious mood.

She always waved at me brightly, like a kid and its grandparents.

She was also usually hopping and asking about more cakes in the future.

This feels super weird.

I feel anxious.



Heavy-hearted, I got on the portal at the corner of the waiting room and activated the portal.

Through the portal, I passed the bonfire room and went to the 17th Floor stage.

[Welcome to the 17th Floor stage in Hell difficulty.]

The stage was inside a huge building.

Other than that, I didn't notice anything special about the place. I didn't notice any problems either.

There was nothing here. It was just me standing here.

What is this stage.

[The 17th Floor's trial will start.]

[The 17th Floor's trial is ending.]

[You cleared the 17th Floor stage in Hell difficulty.]

[All status abnormalities and wounds will be recovered.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for being the first one to clear the stage.]

[Many Gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 800 points.]

[Many Gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 200 points.]

[Additional rewards will be given based on your play record.]

[You acquired 3000 points as the additional reward.]

What is this?

I don't get it at all.

Why did the trial end as soon as it begun?

Why was the clear condition met? What did I do?

There were so many things I didn't understand.

I was dumbfounded.

I pondered about it, but I could not think of anything to explain this.

I scratched my head for a moment and got on the portal.

I should ask Kiri Kiri.

I cleared the 17th Floor, so I can use its information allowance to ask her.

“Teleport.”

It hasn't been a single minute since I left the Kiri Kiri's field. I was back already.

Unlike when I came to see her after clearing 16th Floor, Kiri Kiri greeted me with a slightly gloomier look on her face.

“... As I thought, you came back soon.”

## Chapter 106 - Tutorial 17th Floor (2)

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[Will it really be all right?]

[Don't worry too much. Do you have any idea how long I thought about the 17th Floor? The preparation is perfect.]

[Okay...]

[Check the usage instructions for the equipment I sent you once again. If you are still anxious about this, hold out at the bonfire room for another round and practice before going. You can challenge the floor during the next round.]

[I think that would be better.]

[I've been repeating this, but do not let your guard down. Once you start fighting it, you will see it is not as hard as you thought. Still, if you let your guard down, you will die immediately. Stay focused. Don't panic if it curses at you or tries to talk to you. Don't get played by its mental game either. Don't show any gaps in your defense. No matter what, don't let it dictate how the battle goes. Also, it will be most dangerous when you are about to finish it off. Do not forget this. Fortunately, I was still clumsy about using the Transmutable Thousand Arms, so you won't have to be so mindful of the weapons. It's flashy only in appearance. Don't worry too much about summons spirits in middle of the battle either. If it gets a wind of you worrying, it might try to exploit that, so... Also...]

[Yes. Mister, do not worry too much. I'll definitely clear it.]

[Okay... Don't die.]

\*

“Can you explain it first?”

Kiri Kiri looked gloomy. She kept silent for a moment.

This is odd.

The 17th Floor was cleared at a nonsensical speed. I am speechless; I don't quite understand the situation.

However, besides that, I'm even more anxious about the fact that Kiri Kiri seemed so affected by this matter.

This is the first time seeing Kiri Kiri looking so gloomy.

No, this is not the first time.

She was like this once before.

It was for a brief moment that passed by in the blink of an eye, but there was a time when she looked like this. She looked sorry during that time.

When I cleared the First Floor and met Kiri Kiri for the first time, I asked her a question.

She said she could not answer that question. However, I asked and insisted on it anyways.

I asked... what happen to the people who die in the Tutorial.

I'm getting more and more anxious.

"Please wait, Kiri Kiri."

"Um. I'll wait."

Before Kiri Kiri gave me her answer, I wanted to reach my answer first.

The answer would have been the same anyway, but I feared that my mental strength would crumble out of my anxiety and her possible confirmation.

However, no matter how hard I thought about this, I could not figure out why Kiri Kiri was sad. I could not figure out what happened at the 17th Floor either.

I thought about asking for advice from others through the Community. However, I realized that it would be pointless.

Finding the answer on my own so I won't have to hear it from

Kiri Kiri...

On top of this, asking another for advice to find the answer...

That was inefficient and illogical.

Damn it.

Still, I'm so concerned. What can I do?

Kiri Kiri had always been bright and energetic. Seeing her in this gloom-and-doom mood is completely inconsistent with her character. It is shocking to watch.

Even today, right after I cleared the 16th Floor, Kiri Kiri was as energetic and excited as ever.

She became gloomy like this after I started worry about the 17th Floor.

I kicked the dirt on the ground and turned over the poor grass that did nothing to deserve being pulled out that way. Kiri Kiri said, "I'll tell you now. You will hear it eventually anyway, right?"

That's right...

"The 17th Floor stage's theme was a duel."

"Duel?"

"Yes. One on one duel. Although the opponent is a little unique..."

Ah...

Ah ha... That's what it is...

Because she said the opponent is a little unique, I could understand the theme of the 17th Floor.

It was a duel between challengers, like the tournament.

"That's right, it is like that."

However, I was the only 17th Floor challenger in the Hell Difficulty. So, the stage could not proceed normally.

Therefore, it was immediately cleared and I was sent back here.

“Yes.... But not exactly.”

“Not exactly?”

“That’s right... By design, the very first challenger to ever reach the 17th Floor will clear the stage without any trial. It is not a flaw in the design. If there was a flaw, then you would have achieved the conquest clear.”

“The first challenger gets to pass the stage safely no matter what? Then what about the next challenger?”

“The mirage of the first challenger... remains and the next challenger will be fighting a duel against it.”

A mirage? The first challenger’s mirage?

“I’m sorry, Kiri Kiri. Can you please explain it in detail? I’m so confused; can you explain it to me again?”

“Other than the very first challenger who reaches the 17th Floor, all other challengers after that must fight a duel against the mirage of the challenger who cleared the floor before them. That’s the 17th Floor’s trial.”

My head is not working.

It was as if a nail was pierced a corner of my brain. My thoughts were not being able to process. They were stuck somewhere.

“In that case... What about that mirage? Tell me about the mirage.”

“As for the mirage... It has the exact same powers as the challenger from the moment the challenger cleared the 17th Floor. Tendencies, strategic thinking, habits, and even items... Everything is identical from that moment.”

[Battle Focus]

My thoughts were in chaos. I used the battle focus in a futile

attempt to get a hold of myself.

My head was extremely disarrayed, lost in the confusion.

Let's focus.

This is an important matter.

Let's summarize what Kiri Kiri said.

She was saying that the challenger who reaches the 17th Floor after me will fight a copy of me that was made when I cleared the 17th Floor.

She was talking about a battle between the version of me from the 17th Floor and some other Hell difficulty challenger who reaches the 17th Floor.

... There is no way that challenger was going to beat me.

"What about the mirage... How is the mirage comprehending the situation?"

This was the most important part.

If the mirage could be convinced about the situation, the stage could be cleared without a battle.

"The mirage thinks that it must defeat the enemy it is facing at the 17th Floor so it can advance past the trial. It is not aware that it is just a mirage."

"No matter who the opponent is?"

"That's right..."

Perhaps because of the complicated thoughts in my mind, my urge to vomit surged.

I suppressed the urge and continued my questions.

"Tell me about what it is thinking in terms of defeating the enemy. How exactly?"

"Kill..."

I felt my legs faltering.

I plummeted.

Kill?

A mirage who thinks like me and has the same powers like me from the time I was at the 17th Floor is going to fight with intent to kill?

I know I had been trying to avoid taking lives needlessly; actually, I had been avoiding killing anyone even when there were benefits to be had and killed only when it was absolutely necessary, but...

This time, it was convinced that killing was necessary.

Therefore, my mirage will try to kill its opponent, and it will try without hesitation.

“Are you all right...?”

I was sitting on the ground and had my head lowered. Kiri Kiri came next to me and asked.

However, I didn't have any mind left to spare to respond to her question.

My mind was already focused on someone else.

I feel dizzy.

I'm at a peaceful green field with nothing but the sound of gentle breeze, yet I feel like I'm hearing a violent sound of hurricane.

I still felt like I was going to throw up. Holding it in, I opened the message window.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Hyung-jin.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Yes, Big Bro. Oh, you are already at the 18th Floor. It looks like you cleared the 17th Floor with ease. You told me the 16th Floor was giving you a headache.]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Big Bro, what is it?]



[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Did something happen?]

[Lee Hyung-jin, 4th Floor: Big Bro, if you are busy, then please contact me later. I'll wait for message.]

\*

[Round 17, Day 25, 06:10]

In the end, I was not able to say anything to Lee Hyung-jin. I spent 24 days without saying a word to him.

At Kiri Kiri's green field, which comforted my heart, I spent the time and agonized about the problem. Over time, I started to see the answer.

My heart, which felt heavy as if it was filled with lead all of the sudden, became lighter to some extent.

I was certain that Lee Hyung-jin was going to be the next challenger to reach the 17th Floor.

Besides him, no other challengers in the Hell difficulty had cleared the First Floor yet.

Compared to these other people, who I was not even sure about when they were going to clear the First Floor, Lee Hyung-jin's speed of progression is overwhelming.

He is already at the Fourth Floor.

He will face a big obstacle at the Sixth Floor, but once he gets past that, he will be able to reach the 17th Floor safely.

The problem was when he gets to the 17th Floor.

Perhaps there won't be much difference between Lee Hyung-jin and myself in terms of stats.

He probably would have obtained a few power skills by the time he gets to the 17th Floor.

However, if we were about equal in skills and stats, does Lee Hyung-jin stand a good chance of winning?

I don't think he has much chance of winning.

What sets me apart from others the most is the fact that I obtained the Blink and the Talaria's Wings.

However, what if I didn't get them in the beginning?

Also, what if there was a challenger on higher floors who continued to advance to the next floors and gave me information about the ones he passed?

In that case, I would have taken about four to five rounds to clear up to the Fourth Floor.

Even if it took long, it would have taken six rounds.

I am certain I would not have died either.

After confirming that the power skills were world-defying cheats, I intentionally did not use the power skills through the Third, Fourth and Fifth floors.

The lack of power skills definitely makes a huge difference in combat potential.

However, the information is far more valuable than the power skills.

When I was in and out of the River Styx a few times because of traps, such instances were mostly when I didn't have information about the traps.

I obtained information about the traps by putting my body in harm's way.

I got to where I was by observing unpredictable attacks coming from unexpected places and responding and dodging them instinctively.

There is that difference between me and Lee Hyung-jin.

There is a difference in fundamental skills.

A mirage of myself from the 17th Floor that knows nothing about

the situation will be fighting Lee Hyung-jin who does.

No matter how I think about it, I'm leaning toward the mirage of myself as the victor.

On top of that...

I am currently unaware of the limit of my own power.

If I let it go and use my full strength to fight to the death, what kind of foe would I be able to stand up against?

I don't know.

I don't even remember when was the last time I was pushed to the brink of death.

It's been a long time since the early days at the Sixth Floor, towards the end of the Seventh Floor, once at the 13th Floor.

There has not been another incidence so threatening since then.

There was a time when my life was in danger because I let my guard down. However, I had never been cornered out of an opponent's overwhelming power.

So, naturally, I had never been pushed to the limit.

At the 13th Floor, at the Master Monk's room, the theme was strongly focused on reaching and challenging the limits of the senses and mental focus.

My attitude during the battle against the Master Monk was not all that desperate.

My body's condition was extremely poor when the battle started, so I was almost at the brink of death, but...

No, more importantly, the Master Monk's room itself is beyond the 13th Floor's difficulty.

The clear condition for the 13th Floor was getting past 15 rooms. The Master Monk's room was at 33rd room.

Damn it.

My head is whirling around again.

“Your assumptions could be wrong.”

Kiri Kiri had been watching me quietly from the side. She said, “The possibilities in the future are limitless. Instead of being despaired about what could happen, it would be better to make preparations.”

Is that so?

I had not considered a single iota of chance that Lee Hyung-jin would be able to beat the mirage version of me at the 17th Floor when he gets there.

I was so stuck with the idea that he was going to lose. It is no wonder why all possibilities I thought of for Lee Hyung-jin were so pessimistic.

Instead, I should assist his growth until he gets to the 17th Floor so he could defeat my mirage.

The important things are the method and process for doing that.

I should evaluate my current powers and have Lee Hyung-jin grow in the direction that would enable him to win.

Also, the information that my mirage has about Lee Hyung-jin is going to be what Lee Hyung-jin was at the Fourth Floor.

The information would be very outdated. Lee Hyung-jin could exploit this.

There are plenty of ways, and there is plenty of time.

Also, Lee Hyung-jin is only at the Fourth Floor.

I don't know how long it would take him to get to the 17th Floor. Also, who knows how strong he would be by then?

My thoughts were all tangled up for hours, but strangely, they were organized in a single breath.

I looked at Kiri Kiri.

She turned around and crunched down. She was making scribbles on the ground.

They were strange-looking letters. I could not comprehend them. I don't think I should mind what she is doing.

I cannot tell Lee Hyung-jin to give up challenging the 17th Floor and stay at the waiting room and stages before the floor for the rest of his life.

From now on, I should care more about his growth and help him clear the 17th Floor safely. That will do.

It will be difficult, but it was not like anything was easy in Hell Difficulty.

“Kiri Kiri, if the next challenger defeats my mirage, then what about the challenger that reaches the floor afterwards?”

“The third challenger will be fighting the duel against the mirage of the second challenger who cleared the 17th Floor.”

... If it progresses like that, then the mission will get increasingly difficult as more challengers pass. After a few iterations, the 17th Floor will end up being far more difficult than other floors above it.

Isn't this a design flaw?

“No, it is not a design flaw... It was also intended to be so by the Architect.”

My head was just about to calm down, but hearing Kiri Kiri's explanation enraged me again.

What kind of insane idea is this? Why did the Architect design the stage in a crappy way like this?

Lately, things were going well, so I had not been cursing at the Tutorial's design. I even regretted not cursing at it for so long.

I don't care what the Architect was thinking or what the intent

was. The Architect is a piece of shit.

[The God of Adventure is agreeing with you.]

[The God of Slowness is watching you.]

See, even the God of Adventure is agreeing with me.

It's been some time since God of Adventure and I agreed on something.

Wait, is this the first time.

Phewwaaaaa...

My thoughts are organized now, but I don't feel all that refreshed.

Frustrated, I messed up my hair.

Ah, it's bleeding.

Damn it. I put too much strength into my hand.

I sighed heavily for a while. In the end, I opened the messenger.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18th Floor: Hyung-jin, let's talk for a bit.]

\*

[The second Tournament will be held.]

[Please enter.]

[Time left until the mandatory summoning: 14 minutes 59 seconds]

# Chapter 107 - Tutorial 60th Floor (10)

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[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: All right... Don't die.]

I sent the message to Lee Yun-hye.

I'm sure she will do well.

She's made plenty of preparations. The rest is up to her.

I was about to close the large book on the desk, but I stopped my hand.

Instead, I flipped to the front page.

The contents at the beginning of the book were the records up to when Lee Hyung-jin challenged the 17th Floor.

Most of the contents were about plans and records for accelerating his development.

Also, the pages were filled with comparative analysis between him and the mirage at the 17th Floor as he continued to develop.

I flipped each page slowly as I read the contents.

Soon, I got to the part that was just before Lee Hyung-jin challenged the floor.

The day before he challenged the 17th Floor, the records showed a detailed analysis of his growth, simulation of his duel against the mirage, the result and his analysis of the simulation's results.

That was the end of the records by Lee Hyung-jin.

As for the records afterwards... They were not by Lee Hyung-jin.

Ugh...

I brought out a piece of candy from the inventory and bit on it.

I decided to correct my habit of signing whenever I felt uneasy.

As Yong Yong grew, he started to be even more disapproving toward my singing.

Does he hate it that much?

Whenever he heard me sing, he snarled like a cat who just heard the vacuum cleaner turning on. Thinking about his reactions to my singing shames me a little.

I could understand Yong Yong.

I was well aware that I was terrible at singing.

So, instead of singing, I decided to put something sweet in my mouth.

I've heard that sweet substances improve one's mood, although I don't think it is helping much.

I was thinking about this while remembering a friend who always looked happy to have something sweet. However, this turned out to be not all that great of an idea.

Thinking about the friend made me feel good for a moment.

However, right after that, I felt low again.

I have not seen that friend for such a long time now.

[What are you doing? Masturbating by yourself?]

This lunatic bastard. What did you just say?

[What are you doing all cooped up in your room? Why are your emotion in such chaos? You are making me get motion sickness, so calm down, will ya?]

Lately, the clone bastard said he wanted to have his own private life, so he had the mental and emotional links severed.

However, because he was my clone, he couldn't completely severe the emotional link between us.

In the end, he must have somehow felt the change in my mood. That must be why he is complaining.

Ugh...



As I thought, eating something sweet does not help calming my mind at all.

With the candy still in my mouth, I started to sing as my usual habit dictated.

Concerned that Yong Yong might hear it outside, I sang in a quiet voice.

I felt like I could calm down a little as I hummed.

With a slightly lighter mind, I finished reading the rest of the book.

Now, the records were detailing Lee Yun-hye's growth.

I carefully read to the very last page and closed the book.

The 17th Floor. I had been agonizing for a very long time because of the 17th Floor.

Actually, the theme of the floor was not particularly problematic.

Let's think about this based on the information gathered so far.

In a way, it could be said that the stage had a creative motive.

The 17th Floor was focused on analyzing the information about the challenger who passed it last.

It was the first stage ever to be about another challenger.

The battle was going to be decided on how well the new challenger analyzes the information provided about the past challenger at the time of clearing the 17th Floor and comes up with countermeasures to defeat the mirage of the past challenger.

The preparation for the battle was more important than the duel itself.

Besides analysis, communication, social skills and personal relationships were important.

If the past challenger who cleared the 17th Floor intentionally lies about one's own abilities, it could be fatal to the new challenger.

On top of this, it is not easy to provide detailed information about one's own abilities.

This has to be based on trust.

So, the 17th Floor is strikingly unique from other stages where the challenger grinds and struggles to clear the stage. It recognizes that the Tutorial system is a society of its own, and the preparation for the duel is done using this assumption.

This method of clearing the 17th Floor could be easily implemented because of the characteristics of the challengers.

Challengers grew through acquiring skills, so they usually developed specializations.

Some lacked close-range combat skills, so they were defenseless against close range attacks. Some were weak against flanking attacks. Some were weak against magic. Some were weak against mental attacks. Some were weak against a drawn-out battle or a short battle. Some were neutralized by specific items or skills.

Exploiting such unique weaknesses, the challengers could clear the stage in order like playing rock-paper-scissors.

Challengers in the American server my advice and clearly established the specializations of the challengers. They picked orders and challenged the 17th Floor.

So, most challengers were able to pass the 17th Floor without much trouble.

In our server, the problem was me.

Unlike other servers, in Korean server, we had an irregularity named Lee Ho-jae.

I didn't exactly have any specialization when I was at the 17th Floor.

Perhaps because I had a tendency to not want to have any weakness, or perhaps I happened to have been gaining skills I

needed at the right times, but...

I didn't have any particular weakness back then.

I was good at everything: drawn out battles, short battles, fighting against many, few, fighting a surrounding formation, difficult battles, I was strong against everything.

I was immune to mental attacks. I even had resistance to curses.

In addition, I could ignore most status abnormalities.

Against ranged fighters, I could get close in an instant with superior movement skills. Against the close-range fighters, I squashed them with my attack power and ability to take on beatings.

I was also good at fighting against magic. Skills like stealth were no use against me.

On top of this, I was quick, so I always got to deal the first strike.

I really didn't have an answer on how to fight something like me.

On top of this, I was firm with split-second decisions. I had great senses, and I had quick reflexes.

I never hesitated to fight dirty when I realized the opponent was powerful.

Moreover...

When the situation turned against me, I used moves that harmed both my opponent and myself.

In such situations, relying on my pain resistance, faint resistance and etc. and my mental strength and focus, I charged in risking both of us getting hit and possibly dying in the process.

I really am a mad dog.

Also, the 16th Floor had the doppelgangers, and this was a problem.

The mirage at the 17th Floor has fresh memories of the

doppelgangers.

If the challenger tried to convince the mirage by explaining the secret behind the 17th Floor and ask it to help the challenger pass through the 17th Floor...

The mirage will smile, say 'ah, yes. That totally makes sense. Haha,' and stab the challenger.

Convincing the mirage was not going to be possible.

Even if the challenger tried to mention some distant memory that might trigger a response from the mirage; the Tutorial system won't allow it.

The mirage won't comprehend it or delete it from the memory immediately.

In the end, to fight the mirage of myself from the 17th Floor, there is no point in aiming for the specialization.

The challenger has to fight me by having superior stats, although even that won't guarantee victory.

There is no other way.

[That's true.]

Didn't you sever all links with me?

[I reconnected them. I was wondering what was going on.]

Is that so.

Um...

Hey, what would my mirage at the 17th Floor think when it meets someone of Lee Yun-hye's caliber as the opponent?

[It probably will curse at the difficulty.]

That's probably it.

It will promptly swear at the gods.

[It might lose. Out of 100 fights, about 80 of them.]

What about the rest?

[They will both die in about 15 fights, and maybe it will manage to win in the over five?]

That's probably right.

No matter what, it was not possible to raise Lee Yun-hye's chance of victory any further.

Her power was in no way insignificant.

Lee Yun-hye was already significantly more powerful than my former self at the 17th Floor.

[What could we do now? We did everything we could. Lee Yun-hye grew as much as she could as well. This is the limit. Nothing is going to change even if we delayed this any further. I am certain about this.]

Still, I am so worried.

[By any chance, if something goes wrong this time again, don't go kicking yourself and dig a hole on the ground. It is so unsightly to watch. You have Yong Yong now.]

Do you have to talk to me like that?

Aren't you anxious?

[I don't have much thoughts on the matter. To begin with, I was born at the 60th Floor and have been living here since. It was an incredibly boring life. Still, since Yong Yong was born, I felt like I could enjoy living. I had been living well since. When I can go outside, that would be fun too, but I won't be so shocked if I cannot.]

It must be great being you since you don't have any worries.

[Why don't you come out soon? Yong Yong is waiting.]

Having heard what he said, I checked the time.

It was almost time for dinner.

After dinner today, we were going to have Yong Yong try out polymorph magic.

Yong Yong was very excited about the prospect of transforming into a form that was similar to me and the clone.

Yong Yong had been waiting for this for days and focusing on polymorph magic.

He will want to finish dinner as soon as possible and challenge polymorph magic.

Thinking about Yong Yong who was probably anxiously waiting for me to join them for dinner, I got out of the room.

\*

“Shall we start?”

Having heard the clone bastard, Yong Yong stepped onto the magic circle. He bobbed his head up and down eagerly.

Actually, it has been a while since Yong Yong mastered the polymorph magic.

It's been two rounds... So, two months?

However, Yong Yong wanted to look completely human.

Also, he did not want to show his progressive iterations to us.

He obsessively tried to hide his intermediate forms of being about half human and half hatchling.

The clone bastard thought of it as a teenager who would not want his parents to see him changing clothes. I thought it was because Yong Yong was a perfectionist when it came to magic.

Anyway, we never saw Yong Yong in a polymorphed state.

Of course, if we wanted to peek at Yong Yong's polymorph training, it's not like he could stop us, but we didn't because we were certain that Yong Yong would hate that.

Perhaps it was something unique to dragons, but Yong Yong was

especially sensitive to privacy.

Slowly, Yong Yong started to recite the incantation.

Although polymorph was a high-level magic, the incantation was completed quickly.

“Polymorph.”

With the activation word, white smoke was generated and hid Yong Yong.

Actually, polymorph magic didn't have such a smoke effect.

It was a special effect added by Yong Yong.

Could it be that he is embarrassed about the transformation sequence, just as the clone bastard thought?

I could hear cracking noise and Yong Yong's faint cries.

It seemed his mastery was not high enough to go through the polymorph painlessly.

After a while, the white smoke was gone. Yong Yong looked human. He shouted brightly, “Success! Dad! I succeeded!”

He was excited. Yong Yong was running toward me. I wanted to smile back at him, but the tip of my mouth refused to move because of one problem.

Yong Yong looked unrealistic. He looked like something straight out of a fashion magazine.

First, as of a hatchling of a silver dragon, he had silver hair and silver eyes. He was short, reaching around my waist.

Also, he was wearing extravagant clothing, something that people from the days of Rome wore.

[PR Note: Basically your super-cute adorable anime kid with silver hair and silver eyes wearing a toga.]

Silver hair and silver eyes were common in anime. However, seeing them in real life looked very unrealistic.

I was not saying they were odd. I was just saying his appearance was that mesmerizing.

Actually, that was not the real problem.

I was panicking for a completely different reason.

It seemed the clone bastard was panicking for the same reason. Confused, the clone bastard said, [Was Yong Yong a girl?]

\*

She was sitting on my lap. Yong Yong was curious about having ten fingers on her hands now. She fiddled with them as I watched her.

I still could not recover from the shock.

No matter how I looked at her, Yong Yong's polymorph appearance was not a boy who happen to look really good and fair. Yong Yong appeared to be a girl.

[I thought she was a boy because you told me Yong Yong is your son.]

I thought so too.

Damn it, how did I screw this up?

My brain was not running properly because of the shock.

No matter how I look, she is a girl.

Her long hair was coming down to her shoulders.

The skull structure of her face, the shapes of her facial features...

Also, below her head...

Kang!

Yong Yong suddenly got down from my laps. She generated a transparent barrier.

It was a seal that prevented mana from approaching her.

“No!”



She created a barrier between me and her. She showed her palm toward me and shouted in a stern voice.

If anyone else saw this, they would have been reminded of a policewoman who was directing the traffic.

“... That’s right. If someone tries to examine you with mana, block it like that.”

“Yes! I did well, right?”

“Yes, yes. You did well, our Yong Yong. You remembered my words well. You are so smart.”

I praised her like that. Yong Yong disengaged the barrier and smiled widely, thinking she accomplished something monumental just now.

I stroke her head and sighed inside.

Ugh...

I was too thorough in protective education.

[Should I try to examine her without her knowing?]

Don’t bother. If she notices still, then how are you going to explain that to her?

Considering Yong Yong’s caliber, it won’t be easy to get past her barriers and examine her internal organs while keeping her oblivious.

Also, I taught her that examining another person through mana is very rude. I also taught her that it should not be done to anyone except to enemies.

On top of this, I told her that she could not let down her guard, especially among those close to her.

Yong Yong hated doing this in the first place as well.

I was glad that Yong Yong thought what I did earlier was just a test like the ones I had been giving her in the past.

Ugh... The early education is coming back to haunt me.

[Check after having Yong Yong turn back to the hatchling form.]

Check what?

[Check the thingy. She is wearing clothes in polymorph form. Won't the thingy be visible if you flip Yong Yong in the hatchling form?]

... It is not possible to check the gender via visible inspection.

[What? How could that be?]

It turns out there are some species of lizards where determining the gender through visual inspection is not possible.

[... In that case, let's check in the current form.]

What?

[It's easy to determine gender for human beings.]

Having said that, the clone bastard bravely approached Yong Yong.

“Yong Yong, try holding still for a bit.”

“Okay, Uncle!”

Yong Yong smiled and responded.

It seemed the clone bastard was relieved to hear that. He relaxed his face a little and grabbed Yong Yong's clothes.

At that moment, Yong Yong showed an extreme response.

She snatched the clone bastard's wrist and twisted it behind his back to neutralize him. She then shot a powerful shockwave at the defenseless clone bastard's back.

The quiet residential area was filled by a violent sound of explosion. The centerpiece of it all was the clone bastard, who was thrown to the distance and plummeted on the ground.

“No! I hate it! Stop!”

Yong Yong shouted those words in loud, exhilarating voice as if they were the one-liner for a magical girl's transformation scene. Yong Yong then looked at me.

She looked like she was expecting me to praise her.

... I think I was way too diligent in sexual education.

I struggled to hide my troubled mood as I held Yong Yong's hand.

"Yong Yong, you should say 'No' first and then attack. You reversed the order of things."

Yong Yong panicked a little.

"Still, you did well. If anyone tries to take you to a corner or offer candy and asks you to go somewhere or grab your clothes without your permission, then..."

"Shout NO and then attack!"

"That's right. That's right. My Yong Yong is so smart. You remember everything I taught you. Well done."

Perhaps because I tried to examine her with mana earlier, it seemed she was assuming the clone bastard's move was also a test.

I taught Yong Yong to fight off any suspicious individual who tries to approach her; it could be an attempted kidnapping or sexual assault. I taught her to promptly declare that she is refusing such treatment and then attack with full force.

Yong Yong seemed to be in a great mood because of the two consecutive praisings. I stroke her head and said to the clone bastard who was thrown to the distance.

Hey, are you all right?

[...]

Are you not all right?

[What the... She is not even two years old. Why did you teach her such things.]

I heard that things like this should be taught early on.

[Who said such bullcrap?]

I read it from a book about raising children.

## Chapter 108 - Tutorial 61st Floor (2)

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The bottom line was that Yong Yong is a boy.

Of course, there was no way I would mistake something as important as this.

The health report from the moment of Yong Yong's birth clearly stated that he was a male.

I am relieved.

[What's there to be relieved about?]

I should be.

Can you imagine the idea of raising a girl as a boy because I was mistaken about the child's gender?

When she grows up, she will resent her dad.

[Instead worrying over something ridiculous, what are you going to do about my wounded heart? I got beat up by Yong Yong and was thrown to the ground. Do you know how that feels?]

Of course I do not know that. How does it feel?

[I felt like crying...]

From the distance, I could feel the clone bastard's emotions.

He was disappointed and surprised. With the two in the mix... I could clearly feel his desperation.

I didn't know what to say back to him, so I didn't respond.

Instead, I put away the Yong Yong's health report and picked up the newspaper.

Before I go out, I should check what's happening in the outside world.

I wanted to hear about what was happening with Kim Min-hyuk. I heard that he established a clan of Awakened Warriors. However,

there was nothing about this in the newspaper.

This month's newspaper does not have much overall.

Still, there was an article that drew my attention.

[Park Jong-shik the SS Rated Awakened Warrior completes his contract with Singapore. He refused to renew his contract with Singapore. Where will he go next?]

The article was explaining Park Jong-shik's expired contract with Singapore and making guesses on his next destination.

The guesses actually listed all countries he might be interested in making a contract with.

The article was not very detailed, but it was interesting still because the article was about someone I was close to.

The Awakened Warriors usually signed contracts with individuals, private companies or countries based on their abilities and performed assigned tasks.

Usually, Awakened Warriors who signed contracts with countries did it for life or in intervals of decades or so. However, the Awakened Warriors from Korea signed short duration contracts even with countries.

The worth of an Awakened Warrior was measured by how much the contract was.

They could earn more money more easily with short contracts. Also, they were treated better that way.

Of course, the countries who signed contract with such Awakened Warrior didn't like the idea, but...

In the Korean server, the challengers already had an organization among themselves inside the Tutorial. It was not like the Awakened Warriors united after they graduated from the Tutorial. So, unlike the Awakened Warriors of other countries, they were able to escape the influence of the Korean government with

relative ease. I wonder if the Korean Awakened Warriors are able to get short contracts with countries because of this.

I'm sure there are other reasons, but this is my guess for now since I don't know much about the outside world anyways.

Regardless, Korea is producing world-class Awakened Warriors, but Korea only got to keep very few as a result.

So, instead of calling Korea as the country with the world's finest Awakened Warriors, I heard that many people see the country as the one that produces the best mercenaries.

Many Awakened Warriors who go overseas maintain their Korean nationalities. Also, there is a clause that makes it mandatory for them to return to Korea in case of national crisis. However...

The world is entering the age of Awakened, and Korea is definitely in the center of this.

Regardless of what's happening, the fact was that Korea did produce the largest number of the best Awakened Warriors.

However, the era was such that a country's power was measured based on the Awakened Warriors that the country had.

Because the Awakened Warriors from Korea were being contracted out to other countries, it was hard to claim that Korea was leading the scene.

Well, what are they going to do?

The other countries give a lot more money.

I heard the conditions of work are better too.

I put away the newspaper and got up.

From the closet, I brought out a set of clothing and changed.

It was about time for me to head out.

I was going to the 61st Floor today.

[Didn't you say you were going there during the next round?]

Lee Yun-hye postponed her challenge of the 17th Floor. She will be going during the next round.

I decided to go to the 61th Floor and come back before that.

[Is that so.]

After I finished changing, I got out of the room.

It was not like I need to make a special preparation for going to the 61st floor.

I just needed to change clothes and get going.

I got out of the shelter, but I didn't find the clone bastard or Yong Yong.

What are they doing?

I could not sense them through detection. They were most likely playing hide and seek.

I decided not to get in their way and instead go straight to the 61st Floor.

It was not going to take me a long time to come back anyway.

Grumpily, I walked to the portal that lead to the 61st Floor. However, I felt a presence behind me.

I instinctively tried to raise my power. However, I realized the identity of the one behind me, so I suppressed my power.

I just quietly walked to the portal.

When I was almost at the portal, I suddenly turned around and extended my hands out toward the presence.

Yong Yong was hiding his presence with magic, but he was revealed.

It seemed he was not aware that he was found out. Yong Yong looked surprised and he unconsciously put on his puppy eyes. I



picked him up.

“My Yong Yong, I caught you!”

Panicking, Yong Yong struggled and he got out of my grasp.

He then fell to the ground.

He moved his hand to feel his back. It seemed he forgot about the fact that he didn't have wings in his human form.

“Are you alright?”

I bent my back and dusted off Yong Yong's clothes.

As I looked at the clothes while dusting it off, I realized I was not familiar with the clothes. It looked strange.

He was wearing clothing that had extravagant laces and ribbons.

It looked like a girl's clothes. However, because he was still young, he looked pretty good in it.

He looked so adorable as well.

I had two reasons why I found the clothing to be strange.

First, it was not the clothing that he was wearing when he performed the polymorph before. Second, it was not a piece of clothing that I bought him either.

[It seems he created it himself with magic.]

... Is that so. I am a little worried about our son's preference.

However, there was another problem that concerned me even more at the moment.

No matter how I looked at it, his clothing was for outdoor adventure.

Also, there was a cross bag on Yong Yong's waist.

He was wearing it with cross-straps. I didn't know what was in the bag, but the bag was full of something.

He looked like a kindergartener who was going on a field trip.

Yong Yong confirmed that there was no more dust on his clothes. He said in a loud voice, “Dad! I want to go with you! To the 61st Floor!”

[I tried to stop him as much as I could.]

Before trying to stop him, I hugged him and picked him up.

I leveled my eyes with him and shook my head.

“Yong Yong, let’s do that next time. It is still too dangerous to go together.”

“No, it is not dangerous.”

“It is dangerous. I’ll go with you when you grow up just a little more.”

Yong Yong was proclaiming that it was not dangerous as if he had been to the 61st Floor multiple times. I told him again that it was dangerous.

Yong Yong brought his hands together at his chest and started to fiddle with them.

He looked so adorable.

“Still, I want to go.”

“No.”

Having heard me say that, Yong Yong sounded disappointed. He buried himself in my chest.

I wonder why he wanted to go to the 61st Floor?

[I wonder if he just wants to go somewhere that’s not here?]

I guess that might be the case.

“I really cannot come with you?”

“You cannot come with me.”

Once Yong Yong grows up... just a little bit more, then I think I should take him to the 61st Floor even if it is just the very

beginning of the place.

It is not a good environment for a child to play in, but for the sake of going somewhere other than here, I don't think it's a bad idea.

There was a wet sensation on my chest.

It seemed Yong Yong was crying.

Oh my... my son. He must be so disappointed that he cannot go with me.

I thought he would cry a little and stop, but considering how wet it feels, I think he is going to make my clothes soggy.

I think he is crying his eyes out.

"Yong Yong, we will definitely go together next time, promise?"

Yong Yong, with his head buried in my chest still, nodded.

It seemed he was still not feeling better. He continued to cry.

I don't know why, but looking at him like this made me smile.

Usually, seeing one's own son cry should invoke a sense of sadness, but...

Looking at Yong Yong in my arms, I just thought he was adorable.

He was adorable in his hatchling form, but watching him moving around in my arms in a human form... His adorableness is going beyond my wildest imagination.

I know he is my son, but could anyone really be this adorable?

No, am I wearing permeant beer goggles because he is my son?

[Hey, why don't you get going to the 61st Floor already? Hand over Yong Yong to me. I'll hug him.]

In middle of all this, why are you acting jealous?

I ignored the clone bastard's nonsense.

I held him up in my arms and lulled him until Yong Yong fell asleep.

When Yong Yong fell asleep completely, I gave him to the clone bastard. I was finally able to go to the 61st Floor.

\*

I was at the top of the snow-covered mountain. It was hard to see even an inch in front of me through the blizzard. I placed my hand at a portal there.

Soon, my body was teleported to a gigantic castle made of transparent ice.

When I was teleported, for the instant, I felt the gazes on me disappeared.

However, right after I was teleported to the castle, I felt their sticky gazes again.

Ugh, I'm sick of this.

I wonder how I lived 24 in this stage with these ominous gazes.

Of course, back then, I didn't even feel it properly. Still, it gives me the creeps just thinking about this 24/7.

"Enter."

The castle's gigantic door opened.

Unlike a castle that was engulfed in lava, the ice castle had numerous sculptures and decorations inside. The castle was significantly larger than the other one.

I need to walk for a while before I can reach the former queen's location.

Of course, I could get there without walking, but that would be rude as a guest.

I was sick of seeing this castle, so I was not interested in its beauty. I just walked forward.

I walked for about ten minutes before I reached the core of the castle.

I approached a door that had a beautiful engraving. The door opened by itself.

[Welcome, King.]

An ice giant, who was sitting at a giant ice throne, greeted me.

[It's been a while.]

"I know. It's been a while, granny."

[I told you to address me as Big Sis.]

Big Sis? Is that appropriate considering your age?

That would be going too far.

[This is unexpected. I was certain that you wouldn't come alone this time. Has that hatchling not grown up yet?]

"Not yet. Also, I have something to discuss with you regarding him."

[Be at ease and tell me.]

"I think it will take some time."

[Do you plan on not bringing the hatchling?]

"Yep. How did you know?"

[I figured it would be more becoming for you to wait for that woman instead of bringing the hatchling. It is just that I didn't know you had the luxury of time.]

"I do. No, I found it."

Lee Yun-hye is already challenging the 17th Floor.

Of course, there is a possibility that she may not get past it, but I don't want to prepare myself for the worst even before she tries challenging it.

As if she was intrigued, the former queen looked at me.

Her gaze was similar to an aunt looking at her little brother or a nephew.

No, it was more like she was looking at her grandkids.

It feels awkward.

[You seem to be in a good spirit. Is it because you have a new friend?]

Although the news I brought was implying that their confinement to this place was going to be prolonged, the former queen was not infuriated.

Instead, with a benevolent smile, she asked that.

“More like a new family member. My mind is at ease, so I was able to make a breakthrough in my development as well.”

The former queen’s look on her face changed to a mischievous smile.

[I think the former king would jump up and down and cause a ruckus if he heard about this. Considering his personality, he won’t just overlook this.]

Now that you mentioned it, that’s true.

I was already getting a headache, thinking about that old man who would shout at me with his ridiculously loud voice.

It is possible that the old man already knew that I was going to make this choice.

Since a long time ago, the old man had been bringing up my indecisiveness and warning me.

Since I’m breaking my promise, I should be prepared to hear some nagging.

[It is your choice. We cannot overturn it as we wish. Let’s talk about something else. I sense that you had grown stronger. Is that right?]

“That’s right.”

[You are growing stronger without bounds. Can you demonstrate your power a little?]

Having heard the former queen, I smiled a little.

Even if she didn’t say so, I wanted to show off my power.

\*

I took a moment to make preparations and activated an isolation barrier.

I felt the sticky gazes disappearing.

It feels refreshing.

At the same time, I am detecting a strong will from the outside of the isolation barrier.

Is it a threat?

[This is...]

“This is an isolation barrier. It blocks all power from outside, including holy power.”

The former queen didn’t say anything for a moment.

[As I thought. Betting our fates on you was the right answer.]

I’m glad to hear you praise me like that.

[I can only say that this is incredible. So, at this moment, no beings outside the barrier can look inside my castle?]

“That’s right.”

[I’m so glad. Although this will be a temporary measure.]

“Well then, I’ll disengage the isolation barrier.”

[Does it take a lot of strength to maintain it?]

“It is not difficult to maintain the barrier. The problem is that there are many higher-ups who would find it uncomfortable to

have their view blocked. It seems they are quite angry about not being able to see inside the residential area already. If I maintain the isolation barrier even in this place, then they might decide to demonstrate their power to curb my ‘insolence’”

[Such rude beings.]

To begin with, they are voyeurism patients.

I raised my hand to disengage the isolation barrier. Immediately, I felt over a hundred gazes on me Over one hundred...



# Chapter 109 - Tutorial 17th Floor (Unknown)

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[Lee Yun-hye, 17th Floor: Yes, I'll start the preparations.]

I sent the message to the mister and moved to the bonfire room.

Phew...

I'm shaking.

Is it because I'm feeling anxious?

Perhaps it was due to the diligent training. Nothing appeared to be wrong with me.

The tips of my hands were coolly still and ready. My senses were sharp.

My entire body was still and collected.

However, I could feel myself shaking, even when I wasn't.

Around the time I got a little used to the Tutorial, I had been hearing stories about the 17th Floor.

Since then, all of my hardships were for the sake of clearing this 17th Floor.

Of course, this was not going to be the only difficult trial to reach the 60th Floor. However, I was certain that this was the most dangerous one.

On top of this, this stage was traumatic for the mister. So, I was constantly told to be wary of the 17th Floor and prepare for it.

When I felt like I was having a little easier time in clearing other stages, I had to handicap myself to increase the difficulties in the stages. Even during the waiting periods, instead of resting, I had to focus on practicing.

I don't think I am a perfect student, but I think I've done all things the mister has told me to do, within realistic limits.

I was now facing the very reason for all of my dedication.

Since I'm about to challenge the 17th floor, perhaps it is only normal for me to feel nervous and shaken?

Phew...

I can't seem to calm myself.

Mister said I should put my hand into the bonfire in times like these and get a grip from feeling the pain.

Isn't that nonsense?

Anyway...

It is time for me to focus. I should get rid of useless thoughts.

Mister said I am significantly stronger than his former self at the 17th Floor.

Mister didn't praise me easily because he was concerned I might become complacent. Considering this, that was a rare occurrence.

Anyhow...

Even I think I'm stronger than what the mister was at the 17th Floor.

As he put it, I am significantly stronger than his former self.

When he got to the 17th Floor, it was still at Round 17.

To borrow how people put it in the Community, the time period around Round 17 was now treated like the stone age where the cavemen walked around with wooden mace and mumbled 'wooga wooga.'

Back then, nothing was known about the mechanism behind casting. Nothing was known about methods for acquiring skills or items.

Without settings or growth methods for classes or skill trees, people passed through trials on their own and got rewards from clearing the stages. That was all they had back then.

It is obvious that there are huge differences in what we know and

have now in comparison to past challengers.

On top of that, I am being supported by mister, so this is especially true now.

However, he never stopped worrying.

He thought there definitely was a chance that I might be defeated by the mirage. To minimize this chance, he painstakingly agonized about every little thing.

There was a time when I thought he was worrying excessively because of a trauma. However, I am certain that is not the case now.

Now that I am actually at the 17th Floor, I came to know with certainty just how much of monster he is.

What in the world...

He got to the 17th Floor in just 17 rounds.

That is ridiculous.

That means, on average, he progressed one floor per round.

In Hell Difficulty...

Where was I at my 17th round since I entered the Tutorial?

Around the Sixth Floor?

I think I was stuck at the Sixth Floor.

If I was to get to the 17th Floor by the 17th Round since I entered the Tutorial, I wonder how much more work and hardships would I have had to endure?

How much luck and talent would be needed?

I cannot even get a feel for it.

Also, I'm sure these differences are what's making mister worry so much.

No matter how far ahead I am in specs, a complacent attitude will

be poisonous.

As he said, I'll die right away if I let my guard down.

I must focus.

I brought out the necessary items from the inventory in order.

I looked at the paper with the list and brought out the items. They ended up filling the entire bonfire room.

Now, I have to eat all of these.

I think I'll turn into a pig.

It was fortunate that most of them were liquid medications.

First thing is...

They were pills that minimized my urge to defecate and urinate.

They were high quality medicines that allowed absorption of all nutrition and eliminate only the waste of the waste.

I don't know how it works in detail.

Um...

I was wondering why I had to eat these first. However, after seeing the items all over like this, I think I know why now.

If I take such a large amount of liquid medicines, my stomach and intestines will be full.

I swallowed the pills and checked the second list.

There were seven different kinds of self-strengthening liquid medications.

I had to take them in the right order. Mister made them in rainbow colors, red, orange, yellow, green, blue, dark blue, and purple. In that order, I drank the liquid medicines.

These are a lot...

I only took the second list liquid medications so far, but my inside feels too full already. It tastes bitter too.

There is a faint taste of strawberry. That's making me feel worse. He didn't need to include such a fruit flavor...

The room was still full of liquid medicines on the floor. I sighed. ... Drink them and die.

\*

The liquid medicine was flowing back up through the neck. I quickly covered my mouth.

My throat was refusing to swallow the medicine. I forced it to move and barely managed to swallow it.

Finally, I drank them all.

If this is not a prime example of human will's victory, I don't know what is.

Numerous empty bottles rolling around the floor were the proof of my fighting spirit.

The preparations were not over yet.

Now that I finished drinking the medicines, the next thing to do was to put on the various equipment that he sent me.

I brought them out of the inventory and put them on in order.

I have used them several times before, so it was not hard to put them on.

He minimized the use of the equipment to maximize stage difficulties for me. However, once it became clear that I could clear a stage, he allowed me to actively utilize the items.

I could not afford to be unaccustomed to utilizing the equipment. It would be terrible if I was still clumsy about their use in the most critical moment.

On the wrist guard, I placed several accessories with precious stones. I was wearing ten rings on my fingers. I was wearing loads of bracelets on my wrists as well.

With so many accessories on me, I won't even be able to use a bow properly.

“Activate the combat state.”

With the pre-established activation words, the accessories on me disappeared.

They didn't just become invisible.

I touched my fingers, and I didn't feel the rings there.

The accessories were literally gone.

Despite that, I could still get the effects of the accessories. How intriguing.

Now that I finished wearing all equipment, the next is... performing the ceremony.

I drew a magic circle on the floor dabbed a drop of blood on it.

It is generally known that most summon spirits are not related to sacrificial ceremony. However, the summon spirits actually greatly prefer a ceremony where the contractor pays one's sacrificial tribute in their own blood and flesh.

I heard that this is the purest way for the summon spirits to consume the contractor's mana. I honestly find it creepy.

Watching the magic circle slowly resonating, I sighed again.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: Is the preparation not done yet?]

[Lee Yun-hye, 17th Floor: It is taking longer than I thought. I think it will take until tomorrow morning, so please rest until then. I'll contact you when it is ready.]

Drinking all medicines took longer than I thought.

It cannot be helped. The challenge will have to be postponed until tomorrow morning.

\*

[Welcome to the 17th Floor stage of the Hell Difficulty in Tutorial.]

The interior was empty.

It reminds me of an empty cargo storage building.

There was a transparent barrier at the center. Beyond that was a man standing there.

The man looked around the place with dumbfounded look on his face. As soon as he saw me, he brought out two spherical shaped objects that were each the size of a palm.

Soon, the spherical objects each turned into a long sword and a shield.

Although this was just a mirage, seeing mister in real life like this... It was strange.

He looked similar to what I have seen on televisions before I entered the Tutorial.

He was not exactly the same.

In my memories, although he looked a little sharp, there was a gentle student-like side of him. Unlike that, his mirage was... How should I put it...

He looked a little wild.

That was if I put it nicely. Honestly, he looked a little scary.

[The 17th Floor's trial will begin.]

Description: The Temple of Trial located at the top of the Vetus mountain range had been producing guardians for the holy land of a certain god who refused to reveal the name.

Of many candidates, to select the most powerful guardian, the temple...

I ignored the explanation window that gave me useless backstory.

This was not important at the moment.

[The trial will begin in 30 seconds.]

As soon as the mirage saw me, it changed its attitude.

It looked like it was going to charge at me the moment the barrier disappeared.

This is different from what we anticipated.

Mister told me that the mirage probably won't charge in to attack right away. His former self liked having conversations with people. He said the mirage wouldn't give up this chance to have a conversation so easily.

If possible, it will try to have a conversation, even with someone who it is supposed to fight. He figured that the mirage will try to strike a conversation for the sake of just chatting before the battle really starts.

However, what's with that attitude?

The mirage looked unable to suppress its murderous intent.

It seemed like it couldn't even wait 30 seconds for the barrier to disappear. It came right up to the barrier and stared at me.

Did it go completely berserk because of the system?

There was nothing about that in the information we obtained from the managers.

I should start the preparations for the battle right away.

First, I drew a magic circle on the floor.

“Pantoo. Silia.”

As if it was intrigued from watching me drawing a magic circle, the mirage smiled.

It really looked like it was purely enjoying watching me.

After that, I recited the incantation for the strengthening magic.



All strengthening spells prepared in skills, liquid medicines and equipment were activated.

Next was the summon spell.

The summon monsters that were to be summoned first were the water spirit and five wolf spirits.

The water spirit was over two meters tall. With its ice and water magic spells and its body, the water spirit will stop the mirage from gaining distance on me. As for the five wolf spirits, they will charge at the mirage to hinder its movements.

[The trial will begin in 10 seconds.]

I wish I had more time.

If the mirage wasted just one more minute on useless chatter, I could have prepared even more things.

The situation was not rolling along as smoothly as I hoped. However, it was not like this was completely unexpected.

I was fully prepared for situations where a part of the preparations went to waste.

I brought out the bow and arrows from the inventory.

I placed an arrow on the bow, and my anxiety disappeared completely.

I just needed to place one arrow at the mirage, and that was going to be it.

It didn't matter how it happened. As long as I made one direct hit, that was going to be the end.

The mirage's defensive abilities could not stop my arrow.

With a skill's power added to the arrow, each shot was close to the power of magic casting.

There are also the additional effects by the arrows and the bow themselves.

The arrow could cleanly penetrate even SS rank armors. Also, the attack was going to continuously deal magic based attack on the penetrated subject.

This may be the mister's mirage, but it won't be able to stand more than one shot.

Even mister was certain about this.

On top of this, the mirage had never experienced an arrow of such speed and power.

The mirage had not experienced much magic spells yet either. It won't be able to respond properly to my arrow.

[The trial is starting.]

With that message, the barrier that separated us dissipated.

Precisely when the barrier disappeared, I launched the arrow.

Surprisingly, the mirage responded to the arrow.

It lowered its head to dodge the arrow that was flying at it. It was charging toward me without a moment's delay. Looking at the mirage, I thought, Did it read the trajectory?

Considering the speed of the arrow, dodging it by looking at it was ridiculous.

During the brief moment it took me to place another arrow on the bow, one of the wolf spirit was cut and disappeared.

That was too clean.

I never thought it would be able to destroy a wolf spirit with a single blow.

The mirage was continually demonstrating moves that were different from our analysis and predictions.

I launched an arrow through a gap between the wolf spirits charging at the mirage and the water spirit that was blocking its path.

I shot it precisely aimed at the mirage's neck.

It seemed the mirage was not hindered by the spirits' interferences at all. It dodged the second arrow again.

After that, it struck the advancing wolf spirits down and continued to advance.

The water spirit's movements were unable to keep the mirage from advancing further even for a moment.

Instead of trying to put the third arrow on the bow, I drew distance to the back and prepared a magic.

[Battle Focus]

My focus was heightened. The world was moving extremely slow.

The mirage was probably in the similar state.

From now on, each moment is going to decide the duel.

Before making any move, I need to think as much as possible for a precise decision.

“Flame Wall!”

Flame surged up from the floor and blocked the path between me and the mirage.

As if the mirage was thinking it definitely should, it jumped into the flame without hesitation.

As soon as I confirmed this, I shouted the activation words.

“Pantoo Raka!”

To where I was standing a few moments ago...

I moved to the back of the mirage.

The mirage had thrown its body into the flames.

It definitely will not be able to dodge this time.

Thinking that, I tried to place the third arrow at the bow.

However, I had to change my plan immediately.

The mirage, which was inside the flames, suddenly turned and threw its body in my direction.

Its response is too quick.

This is not through feeling or seeing my movement while being in the flames.

Did he know I was going to move to this place?

How?

It does not know magic, yet it predicted this movement?

“Silia Raka!”

The wind spirit joined my body.

As I felt the wind spirit moving my body to the back, I launched the third arrow that was hanging on the bow.

Kiiiing—

I felt a sound in my head.

It was a warning sound by an artifact that detected the use of an active power skill.

The mirage only had two active-type power skills.

Blink and Soul Steal.

Of the two, the one that would cause this artifact to sound an alarm is the Blink.

The water spirit was not able to catch up to the mirage’s speed. I moved the water spirit to my location.

Phook—

The mirage moved using the Blink. Its blade struck the water spirit instead of me.

I was teleported to where the water spirit was.

The water spirit didn't buy me much time.

The mirage destroyed the water spirit in just two strikes.

It precisely aimed at the summon spirit's core and destroyed it.

The mirage is driving me nuts.

With the little bit of the time gained by sacrificing the water spirit, I launched the fourth arrow.

Again, the mirage moved its body to the side and dodged the arrow.

I can be certain now.

That mirage is looking at the arrow and dodging it.

“Explosion!”

I shouted the activation word, and the arrow, which was flying to the side of the mirage, exploded mid-air.

I succeeded in an attack for the first time.

Kiiing—

Another Blink was used.

Blink also negated all momentum of the subject.

Instead of being blown off by the reaction from the explosion, is it intending to come in close and attack?

Even so, it already is affected by the shock from the explosion.

Is it ignoring the damage head on and approaching me?

It's my turn to make a prediction.

The mirage's stance is seriously compromised because of the close proximity of the explosion.

It only has limited options for attack in that stance if it uses Blink in the current state to attack me.

It could use the Blink to simply avoid the shock from the

explosion. However, considering the mirage's personality, it won't waste the Blink for just dodging the explosion.

The duel was dependent on maintaining distance.

Also, the Blink, which could instantly close in the distance, could be said as the most critical element in the battle.

After using the Blink five times, there was a waiting period before it could be used again. The mirage won't try to waste it.

Highkick.

From that stance, if it used the Blink to approach me, only something like a high kick could deal a critical strike to me.

When I finished my thoughts, the mirage, which was drenched in blood from the explosion, used the Blink and appeared in front of me.

As I predicted, a high kick was coming at me. I blocked it with my right palm.

By the power of the artifact I had on my left wrist, the impact of the kick was negated. At the next moment, Kwang!

The shockwave contained in the artifact launched. The mirage was thrown to the back.

Due to the shock's reaction, I was forcefully thrown to the back, rolling on the floor.

I felt impact on all over the body.

Back, waist, wrist...

After the kick's impact was neutralized, but before the shockwave was launched, the mirage moved its leg again during that brief moment.

The leg was pressing down hard as if it was going to cut through. My wrist, which was blocking this move, was overexerted.

In that state, I had to endure the reaction from the shock, so the

damage to the wrist was quite substantial.

Until the wrist heals, I have to fight with just casting magic.

It won't take long.

Even if it did, 15 seconds at most.

I just need to hold out for one turn.

Thinking like that, I put forth my right hand and got up.

I was thinking hard about which magic to use next. Meanwhile, the mirage on the other side got up and said, "... Strange."

Limping on one leg, the mirage got up. It seemed like it was not intending to charge in right away.

Since the beginning of the battle, the mirage had been focusing only on fighting.

I was curious about what it was saying.

In my head, I thought I should ignore it and attack already. However, my curiosity preceded those thoughts.

What would it say?

Would it ask about my abilities?

It might complain about the unjustified difficulty of the 17th Floor.

"No matter how I think about it, I don't remember you."

What the mirage said was something a little unexpected.

"Yet, you know me?"

# Chapter 110 - Tutorial 17th Floor (Unknown 2)

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[This is from Lee Ho-Jae's mirage's perspective, who is functioning just like Lee Ho-Jae would if he actually participated in the stage.]

Wow... Look at my body...

Isn't this too much?

I slowly got up and checked my leg's condition.

It is completely busted.

I think it will be hard to move my leg right away even if I drank a potion.

That means I'll have to drink an elixir.

However, I don't think my opponent will let me have the chance.

The opponent utilized both archery and magic. She was constantly trying to keep at a distance, and I was constantly dashing into close that distance. This cycle repeated itself again and again in the battle.

I'll end up with an hole in my head if I carelessly tried to drink an elixir.

Wait, maybe it won't end with just an hole in my head?

I looked at the arrows that were stuck on the surrounding.

They were the arrows that I dodged so far.

They all had blasted the ground with terrifying impact, leaving a one-meter crater in its wake.

Does that make common sense? Those?

Is that really an arrow? Even a cannon won't be able to make a round crater like those on the stone floor.



Anyway, what's even more surprising is the arrows that are still stuck at the centers of these craters.

What are these arrows made of?

There was mana swirling around the arrows. It seemed that the arrows dealt damage over time even after its initial impact.

I'm certain.

I'll definitely die if I get struck by one of these arrows.

I can see the woman bringing another arrow toward the bow.

Let's try to buy some time.

"... That's odd."

I was half gambling at this point, but the opponent responded.

I'm so grateful that you did.

It looks like she is interested in having a conversation.

[Battle Focus]

Let's drag this on and formulate my plan while she talks.

"No matter how I think about it..."

Kiri Kiri definitely said that 17th Floor would end quickly.

Did she say that because 17th Floor stage only has a short duel against one individual?

It is odd.

The difficulty is off the charts; it is excessive.

Even the Master Monk at the 13th Floor was not this hard.

It is even weirder that Kiri Kiri didn't give me any advice despite its incredible difficulty.

It looks like I'll need more information about this.

If this happened simply because Kiri Kiri made a mistake, then I shall have my revenge.

This time for sure, I'll purchase each and every kind of cake and eat them all in front of her!

"I don't remember you, yet..."

That woman knows me.

She definitely knows me.

She is familiar with my skills and attack patterns.

Not only does she know recognize my Blink ability, which is a power skill, she has accurate knowledge of my physical strength and speed and had been responding accordingly.

On top of this, she had been preparing things as if she knew what I was going to do ahead of time. This cannot be more trickier.

I could understand it if she is a special kind of opponent who can find out about my stats. In addition to that, she could be quick at figuring things out or possessing a cheat-like power skill of premonition. In such a case, they would make sense.

It is a ridiculous idea, but just how many things in Hell difficulty were not ridiculous?

However, it was hard to accept the look on her face before the battle when she looked at me.

I am pretty good at reading people's faces.

To read the opponent's face and make preparations, I trained myself by practicing. I got used to reading faces so I could understand various non-human beings that I was going to continue to run into in the future.

That woman was definitely glad to see me, or she was happy.

However, right after that, she panicked. She looked a little disappointed too.

She seemed a little petrified during the battle, but well, I've been seeing such faces all the time, so I don't find it surprising.

Anyway, I don't know how, but that woman is not just able to see my stats.

Somehow, directly or indirectly, she knows me. That is highly likely.

I wrap my head around this.

How does she know me?

Is she like a manager?

Like Kiri Kiri, had she been watching the challengers and entered as the boss monster at the 17th Floor?

If she is someone related to the SYSTEM, then Kiri Kiri probably could not tell me the information about her.

I'll need more information regarding this too.

Instead of Kiri Kiri... it would be better to hear from her directly.

At the moment, it is not important to know how she knows me.

I can ask after the battle is over.

What's important now is babbling on with keywords that work well with her responses and buying myself more time.

What should I say next?

I collected my thoughts for a moment and decided, "You..."

I heightened my focus even more.

Before I finish this sentence, I should think of as many things as I can.

I don't think I'll have the time to think about things besides the battle after this.

She really is a ridiculous opponent.

She is superior to me in each and every aspect. It seems she even has information about me.

Still, I think I can beat her.

She appears to be impossible to beat only when stats are concerned, but now that I have fought her, I think it is feasible.

If it was me from the usual days, I would have died a long time ago.

However, I'm facing a life-threatening danger now. It's been a while. It feels like the senses that were asleep for a long time are waking up.

As I thought, a human being needs danger in their lives to reach greater heights.

Lately, I had not experienced any danger in particular.

Let alone danger, I didn't even feel nervous.

When I was fighting the doppelganger at the 16th Floor, even then, I was no more nervous than how it was when I played rock-paper-scissors with Kiri Kiri.

I mean, I was not nervous at all.

Despite me saying to myself frequently that I should not become complacent and let my guard down, it was only natural that my attitude became loose with the lack of challenge.

However, now that a life threatening danger was breathing down my neck, my old senses are coming back online.

Desperately wanting to survive, I was analyzing and planning.

In less than five minutes, I was able to achieve growth that were more than what I gained from the training in the past few days.

I was able to use the Aura Blade with greater stability. I was able to feel the cores inside the summon monsters that the woman summoned and successfully destroyed them.

Through mental tactics, I was able to predict her next move and survive.

Not only that, I was able to even counterattack.

All right, all right.

I sure sound like a crazy bastard, but really.

It feels amazing.

“... you know me?”

I have more than enough chance for victory.

That woman is not able to fully utilize her power.

Even with that, she is overwhelmingly stronger than me, but...

I am awakened from the danger of the situation; adrenaline like no other is pumping through my veins. Even though her overwhelming power skews victory toward her, her unfamiliarity in her own powers is greatly affecting my chance of victory.

Even her shockwave, which destroyed my leg, was an example of her unfamiliarity with her power.

If I didn't turn the leg at the last moment, I would have been more heavily injured.

Actually, if I didn't partially dodge the arrow, I would have been open to further attacks and lost the battle.

The shockwave was that powerful.

What if that woman could adjust the shockwave's angle at a precise moment?

Instead of destroying the leg, it would have cut off my leg.

That woman definitely possesses incredible power, but she is lacking in finesse.

Usually, those in a hurry to try out new powers that they just acquired show these kinds of weaknesses.

Many challengers in Tutorials were like this.

I should aim for this flaw if I can.

Also... Oh I forgot.

I need to continue to talk.

If I don't, she will think something is up.

I must not let this conversation's flow be interrupted.

"I'm disappointed."

I said the wrong words!

Word selection was completely wrong!

Disappointed? What's disappointing?

That does not even sound relevant to what I was talking about earlier.

Due to this mistake, I felt like I was about to roll off a cliff. At that moment, I saw the look on the woman's face.

She was panicking.

That's working?

Someone so strong is unnerved from me saying I am disappointed?

Wouldn't it be more becoming of her to snort and say I am pathetic to say such a thing against her?

Anyway, let's go with it.

"You possess great powers, yet is that all you can do with them?"

The woman's face is crumpling.

She is more shaken up than I thought she would be.

Anyway, I gained time, shook up the opponent's mental game and even grabbed the lead.

The conversation was a success.

Now, let's try it.

There are three wolf monsters left. However, they are not able to catch up to my speeds.

The distance between me and the woman is not significant too.

As for my leg... It is not healed yet.

From what I feel, I think my bones are completely shattered.

I think it would be best for me to fight assuming I don't have one of my legs.

The woman was moving her mouth. It seemed she wanted to say something in protest.

I don't have a reason to listen to what she has to say.

Actually, I should aim for the right timing instead.

When she is about to do something irrelevant to the battle; when she is focused on something else, I should aim for that moment.

"I..."

When she started to talk, I used Blink.

[Blink]

Kang!

I moved to the front of her and swung my sword. However, the sword was blocked by her wrist band.

It sounded like metals clashing, and there were sparks.

Damn it.

Above the wrist band, it seemed a transparent circular shape blocked my sword and stopped the attack.

From what I feel, it is a small round shield.

It was a surprise attack, but it was neutralized because of this strange wrist band.

[Blink]

Instead of drawing distance, I used Blink to move to a half a step closer to her to take the lead again.

Now, I was using Blink to close the distance, and the woman was trying to put distance between us again. The cycle was repeating itself, just when I thought I had broken it.

I didn't know for certain how many ways the woman had to avoid my attacks. I had no reason to play along with her battle of attrition.

I saved the Blink and continued another attack.

I used the shield on my left hand and smacked her.

After that, I turned the sword on the right in to a short sword and tried to stab her stomach.

Kang!

It sounds like metals clashing.

It was not by a layer of mana.

The sword was blocked by something that closer to a magic shield.

Damn it. She sure has all sorts of abilities.

Instead of falling over from the shock, she maintained her stance.

She threw a counter right away.

With the center of weight pulled to her back, her kick came at me like a whip. I blocked it with my right hand.

My stance was not sturdy at the moment, so this was the best I could do.

I was pushed far back.

My right arm was done for.

From that move just now, I confirmed that she was superior even in raw physical strength.

The problem is the next one.



The problem that was bigger than my right arm was the fact that I could not move my left leg.

I was pushed to back, and I could not move one of my legs. This meant I could not respond to the next attack.

However, it seemed the woman didn't realize this. Instead of continuing to attack, she retreated.

It was the skill where an invisible object lifted her and moved her back.

I must not let this drag on.

I saw the wolf monsters charging at me.

I changed the shield on my left to a sword.

[Talaria's Wings]

With the flight effect of Talaria's Wings and the right leg, I dashed forward, and while I was in the air, I used another skill.

[Soul Steal]

It was going to have a direct effect on the opponent. I hoped to draw her attention away with it. However...

There was a strange magic response from her body, and the Soul Steal's effect was nullified.

The woman saw me leaping, and she started to form a barrier in front of her.

She used a barrier instead of avoiding. It seems there is a waiting time until she can use her dodge skill.

However, that's not a good move for her.

In a time like this, she should aim for melee combat instead or move her body to dodge and buy herself more time.

She is physically stronger, and she is faster, so that is far more effective.

It seems her ability to make right decisions is struggling because I took command of the battle's flow.

Against the barrier that was forming rapidly, I swung my sword layered with Aura Blade.

The incomplete Aura Blade that I created has a special response when it collides with a defensive measure such as a barrier that's strengthened with magic.

When it collides with another's mana, it explodes.

Boooooom!

[Blink]

Promptly after the explosion, I used Blink to the top.

I think I'm going to die, seriously.

My body is wounded all over.

I'm enduring a full-frontal explosion in this state.

The woman was also within the explosion's range, but she was standing behind a barrier, so she was probably protected to some extent.

In other words, the attack just now was really close to a suicide attack.

After using Blink to teleport above her I looked, and the woman had her eyes closed.

Was she not able to keep her eyes open because of the explosion?

Perhaps she didn't expect the explosion, or she had a slow reaction time. It is one of the two.

Anyway, thanks to that, I think this will work out easily.

I quickly recited a magic incantation, desperately hoping it would work.

I got a feel for it from feeling the sensation from the magic that

the woman used and the cores that the monsters had. However, I'm trying this out without any practice.

I don't know what's my chance of success.

As I fell from towards the woman from above, she looked at me.

She was lowering her stance and moving her arm. It seemed she was going to block it with the wrist band like earlier.

“Wind Arrow.”

With that, a wind arrow was shot. The woman blocked it by opening a magic shield from her wrist band.

However, because she was stopping the magic attack, her guard had a gap.

That was enough. The wind arrow served its purpose.

The blade on my left hand was already enhanced with Aura Blade.

Unlike earlier, it was completely calm.

The blade was quickly swung downwards, and it cleanly cut off the woman's shoulder.

Blood gushed out from her shoulder like fountain, and the dismembered arm fell to the ground. Watching this, I became certain.

I won.

# Chapter 111 - Tutorial 17th Floor (Unknown 3)

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Kwaaaang!

The mirage's kick threw me to the back and I rolled on the floor, hapless.

“Hey, hey. I kicked a human being's body, but it's not the sound of flesh; rather, the sound of metal. What is it? I wonder what you are hiding.”

Kwang!

My back was kicked again, knocking the wind out of my lungs.

I was protected by the armors, yet I was suffering this much shock. It meant I would have died right away if I had to take it without any armor.

“If you don't pull it out, you are going to receive more beatings.”

“Wait, wait! I'll pull it out, I said I will! It is just the effect from my equipment!”

If that's the case, why didn't you just ask me to disengage it?

Why are you hitting me first and then asking later?

I took off the armor from my shoulder that was attached in invisible mode.

The armor only covered a part of my shoulder, but its magic effect enhanced my entire body.

Of course, this was not the only invisible item that I was wearing at the moment, but I hoped he wouldn't notice.

The mirage observed the armor here and there and raised its leg again, threatening to kick me again.

“You have more, right? Disengage them all.”

... Damn it.

I put down five pieces of armor equipped in invisible mode.

Of course, I still had many more items I was wearing.

“You have more, right? You hid some, right?”

I desperately shouted at the mirage.

“If you kick me in this state, I will really die!”

“Is that so?”

It seemed the mirage was considering his situation. It was not doing anything for a moment.

After a moment, the mirage seemed to finish organizing its thoughts. It brought out another potion from the inventory. It said as it drank the potion.

“If you do anything suspicious from now on, I’m going to attack. Don’t do anything foolish.”

“...”

It was not like I never thought about the possibility of things coming to this, but I really thought it would not come to this.

Ugh.

Really, you are so strong. It’s sickening.

Are you human?

After my arm was cut off, the battle turned one-sidedly into his favor.

I tried to gain distance in any way possible, but the mirage just refused to give up and continued to chase me and attacked.

One of the mirage’s arms was neutralized and it could not use one of its leg, but to think such a difference resulted from it...

I was at a disadvantage, and I was being dragged around while giving up the cards I had one after the other. As the situation

continued, I realized it would be better for me to just give up the battle.

Now that it came to this, I'll go with the second plan.

First, the mirage tossed a potion bottle to me and told me to drink it.

"It hurts a lot, doesn't it? Drink that."

"I'm all right..."

"Drink."

Judging from the engraving on the bottle, it is a type of pain medication.

A pain medication reduces pain, but it also dulls my senses, which is a drawback.

It could be a critical drawback in a situation like this.

I hesitated to drink the potion, and the mirage raised its sword.

Hopelessly and with a crestfallen expression, I drank the potion.

As I thought, it was a pain medication.

That was not all.

It even had paralyzing substance.

Poison?

My necklace was starting to detoxify it.

"Now, I don't know how long we have left. I have much that I want to hear from you, so let's get started right away. Answer honestly to all questions I ask."

As I thought...

Instead of killing me right away, the mirage wanted to get information out of me.

"... I have conditions."

Dumbfounded at my demand, it snorted derisively.

“Old hag, I don’t think you are in position to place conditions?”

I didn’t want to, but I flinched inside.

He called me old hag.

Does he have any idea of what my age actually is?

I know this is mister’s mirage from when he was young, but I am younger than the mirage version of mister.

Old hag!

I have never had been called that in my life.

I desperately strained to maintain facial muscles and tried to maintain the composed look.

However, it seemed that it didn’t work.

“Oh my, look at that expression your face. Hey. If I called you an old hag one more time, I think you will hit a human. I’m so scared that I don’t think I’ll be able to even stomach hearing your condition.”

“I have two conditions to ask. First, give me back my arm.”

I was talking about my arm that was slowly rolling around on the floor.

“I think not killing you right away would be enough?”

“I am well aware of the worth of the information I have. It is more than enough to get additional rewards besides being kept alive.”

The mirage was going to say something, but it closed its mouth again.

The mirage thinks the clear condition for the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor is killing the opponent.

For it, the option for letting me live does not exist.

So, just now, it probably obtained false information that I am not aware of the clear condition.

It probably harbors a suspicion that I am not a part of the Tutorial system, although it probably won't believe it completely.

“All right, let's hear you talk for a bit and then I'll think about it. What's the second condition?”

“Help me pass this trial.”

Since I'm tricking it, I might as well add more to make it certain.

I acted like a character who would appear in the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor stage.

It was such a bold demand, but the mirage will pretend to grant it.

Its goal is gaining information. Once it gains information, it will not give a damn about my trial and promptly kill me.

It will probably think that affirming a false promise is a good idea if it can get information from me in a more sincere manner.

“All right, but I don't know much about the trial.”

“It's all right. I'll explain it to you.”

Afterwards, I started explaining about the background of the trial.

Over about ten minutes, I described the backstory to the trial and the goal of the character I was acting. The doubt in the mirage's face faded.

You have no idea how many times I read the script to memorize this setting.

“If it is only that much, I think I can help.”

“Well then, please give me back my arm.”

“Why do you need it?”

“I want to treat it with magic as soon as possible. I can attach it



back when I receive treatment.”

The mirage was interested in the subject of magic treatment on the arm.

“I have many things I want to ask about that magic.”

“Give me back my arm first. I’ll explain as I do it.”

“I have another thing to ask before that.”

What’s left?

Before he asked, I went over the projected answers list in my head as fast as I could.

“Tutorial... Do you know about the system?”

They were the key words.

How fast I responded would be critical to whether I lived or died.

First, I should put up a dumbfounded face as if I’m trying to say I have no idea what it is talking about.

Like that, maintain hardened face for one second.

After that, a blank face like a retarded patient.

Maintain that for four seconds...

After that, recover the original expression that I had before the question, and ask back as if there is nothing wrong with it.

“I am not sure. I never heard of such. What does it mean?”

There was a glimpse of sympathy in the mirage’s face.

Mister told me he felt sorry for the beings who appeared in stages.

Their fates were enslaved by the system, and their life and death repeated regardless of their will. Mister said he felt sorry for their fate.

I tricked him successfully.

As I thought, instead of becoming a professional archer, I should have become an actress.

One thing I was surprised a bit about was that the mirage did not ask how I knew about its skills and how I responded to them.

I thought it would ask me about them.

Does it intend to figure me out later slowly?

I wondered about this, so I asked,

“Aren’t you curious about how I knew about your skills?”

Having heard my question, the mirage’s facial expressions took a strange turn.

It was the same look that I made earlier.

If the mirage asked that question, then the theme of the answer was going to be about the true identity of the mirage and the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor stage.

It seemed that the mirage could wonder about them, but it was not allowed to actually converse about them.

Also, if the conversation led to it, then the conversation was stopped by the system.

Its consciousness faltered for a moment. That thing is definitely nothing but a fake creation.

The mirage picked up the arm and handed it to me.

After receiving the arm, it felt really odd.

It was not everyday for anyone to hold and feel one’s own arm that was dismembered from the body.

Although, in reality, this is not my first time.

I placed the arm on the floor and drew a circle that was about 2 meters in radius with the arm as the center.

It didn’t really have any meaning.

I just wanted to put the mirage away from me even if it was just a little bit.

“Are you going to start?”

I nodded to the question and activated my magic power.

Watching this, the mirage took a step back.

It was as mister explained.

The mirage is definitely complacent, especially after the battle is decided.

Ugh.

It was a dangerous gamble, but it is working out more easily than I expected.

Taking a knee on the right, I placed my hand on the floor and recited the technique.

Of course, it was not the incantation for healing my cut off arm.

With my cut off arm as the sacrifice, I bring forth the Summon Spirit King!

It was such a tacky line, something that could be from the Yu-gi-Oh series. I shouted the line in my head and opened the link. As soon as it was established, the mana around me started to resonate crazily.

[The God of Nature is overjoyed by your action.]

The mirage charged at me as soon as it realized the sudden commotion.

I calmly put my hand at the artifact I had equipped on my left knee.

White light was spreading to all over the place.

Its effect paralyzed all senses of the opponent for a moment.

In addition to all five senses such as sight and hearing, it even

paralyzed energy sensory.

It didn't last long, but it was enough.

After that, I put my hand on my forehead.

I recited the activation word, and all wounds on my body were recovered completely.

It was not the kind that grew a new arm and closed wounds.

It literally reverted the body's state to before it incurred any wounds.

Although the mirage's senses were all paralyzed, it charged at me.

It remembered my location.

I took a stance and dodged its sword.

After that, I was going to punch the mirage's face.

Kwang!

Instead, I got struck on the side of my face.

This is ridiculous.

Is this is even possible without any senses?

Impossible.

It remembered my position and came at me.

That alone is hard to believe.

It lost all of its senses. It means the mirage is not certain about where it is going and if it is going there properly.

Even in this state, the mirage baited my first response with its first attack, predicted my counterattack and even attempted the next attack.

On top of this, the second attack made a direct hit.

I gave up the battle right away and threw myself backward.

It didn't matter what the condition was. Fighting that monster in close range was suicide.

However, it seemed the mirage even figured out my retreat path. It spread its wings open and chased after me.

I am already linked to the Summon Spirit King.

It will take a bit more time for the King to appear, but as the one who made the contract, I can borrow the King's mana and use it.

I summoned spirits between myself and the mirage.

In addition to beast type spirits, I also summoned elemental types. I summoned anything and everything that came to my mind.

In just a brief moment, I summoned forty elemental spirits.

They were not just enough to stop the mirage, which lost its senses. They were too much.

As I thought, the mirage was unable to shake off the summon spirits.

It seemed it was regaining its senses little by little. It was starting to attack the summon spirits, but it was unable to charge at me right away.

Goooooooooooo

With a light, vibrating sound, the space was distorted.

The Summon Spirit King made the entrance.

The King made entrance as he revealed his mana, which could only be described as humongous. However, its existence felt faint to me.

I felt a stronger existence from the mirage, which was fighting desperately while being surrounded by the spirits.

Instead of feeling the sense of security from the Summon Spirit King's existence, I felt a chill down my spine as I watched the

mirage put up a smile as if he was enjoying vaporizing the summon spirits one after the other, eyes burning with flames.

\*

[You cleared the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor stage.]

Anyway, I cleared it.

I feel like that.

I cleared it, so that's enough.

In the end, the mirage destroyed all summon spirits.

It dodged all the attacks I threw at it from the distance, killed forty summon spirits one after the other and tried to charge at me.

At that moment, the Summon Spirit King started to move, and the mirage tried to stab the King with its weapon. It immediately exploded from just touching the Summon Spirit King.

Phuuuuuaaaaaa.

That was too much.

I felt like I just survived a near-death ordeal. However, after checking my condition, I realized that I was not in that bad of condition.

There were many items that I did not use yet. Moreover, I used the full recovery only once.

I thought I might die once, but I didn't use the revive either.

The battle didn't go as planned, but the end result was good, so all is well.

Giving up on the battle in the middle and leading the mirage on to let its guard down was the key.

I'm glad I memorized the script. When mister sent me the script and told me to practice memorizing it, I honestly questioned its necessity.

I think I handled it pretty well on my own.

I wonder if mister would praise me.

I organized my thoughts and looked at the Summon Spirit King.

He was looking down at the corpse of the mirage.

What are you doing?

It seemed the King noticed my question. He responded for me.

[I wanted to remember this man's appearance. Contractor, I must warn you. Do not get involved with this man.]

With that as his last words, the King disengaged the summoning independently and returned to his own realm.

I got to hear some unsettling words in the end, but today should be celebrated.

With happy heart, I got on the portal.

Soon, my body was transported to the green field.

“Kiri Kiri!”

After seeing me, Kiri Kiri hopped and hopped to run away from me. I chased her and caught her.

“Let me go! Let me go!”

Um. No.

I need healing today.

I tightly hugged Kiri Kiri who was struggling. I didn't let her go.

As I held her like that for a long while, Kiri Kiri gave up trying to get away from me. She sat quietly.

I hugged her tiny frame from behind.

Ah... I can feel the healing.

It feels like hugging an adorable little puppy... no... bunny in my chest.

I wish the time could stop like this.

I placed my chin on top of Kiri Kiri's head.

I could feel Kiri Kiri's two long ears on my cheeks. They were tickling me.

"Hiiiiing. I feel trapped."

Kiri Kiri complained, but I ignored her.

I have a lot of stress today.

I raised my hand and touched the back of her ears. They were soft.

I could feel the back sides of her ears.

She hated being touched in the insides of her ears.

I was like that for a while before I realized that I had not contacted mister yet.

I should tell him about this soon.

Thinking that, I opened the message window.

At that moment, Kiri Kiri said to me,

"Wait a minute. Before that, I have something to tell you."

The tone of Kiri Kiri's voice became serious very quickly. I felt it was strange.

Kiri Kiri vacantly looked up the sky.

[Vote so far: In favor 2207, Oppose 196]

What is this?

I was dumbfounded by the message that appeared all of the sudden.

This kind of message only appears after clearing a stage. Why now?

"Hiiing... I voted against it."



“What is this?”

Kiri Kiri’s long ears fell down all the way.

With gloomy voice, she started to explain.

“The gods want to make a special proposition to you.”

“A proposition?”

Kiri Kiri didn’t answer right away.

She made scribbles on the ground for a moment, organized her thoughts and then started to explain.

“Hear me out to the end and then decide. What? What is it? Ah why! This much should do no harm.”

Now, she was even saying things on her own.

Who is she talking to?

“First, what the gods can give you are power skills. Also, unlimited allowance for information will be added. There might be other gods who want to give you even more depending on your actions, but those are what I can promise at the moment. Also...”

I feel like her mood is getting darker by the moment.

I was hugging her from the back, so I could not see her face, but that’s what I felt.

“What the gods want from you is the information about the 60<sup>th</sup> Floor in Hell difficulty.”

It was unexpected. My mind became vacant for a moment.

“Can you explain that a little more?”

“... Actually, we had been hiding information about him.”

Him? We?

“It may sound like an idea that’s over the river now, but we were aiming for opportunities to monopolize him.”

“Him? Who are you talking about?”

Kiri Kiri didn't respond to my question.

“However, recently there was a bizarre phenomenon at the Hell difficulty's 60<sup>th</sup> Floor, and other gods became aware of him too.”

They were talking about mister.

I wanted to hear more of what Kiri Kiri was going to say, but I couldn't help interrupting her to ask.

“Bizarre phenomenon? What are you talking about?”

This time, there was an answer.

“Recently, the link to the Hell difficulty's 60<sup>th</sup> Floor was completely severed. I think it is because of his attempts at trying to escape the Tutorial. Although it seems he didn't manage to escape.”

Link was severed?

I got messages from mister even just before entering the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor. I even sent him messages too back then.

Also, what do you mean by escape?

“Don't send him a message yet. Listen to the rest of the explanations first and we would like you to make a decision first.”

“Before that, what do you mean the link was severed?! What do you mean by escape?! Explain those first.”

I felt like I just swallowed a lump of flames. My body was heating up.

I felt like I won't be able to hear anything else unless my curiosities were satisfied first.

“... He always had been trying to find a way out of the 60<sup>th</sup> Floor. He actually tried various ideas. This time, his attempt to leave the 60<sup>th</sup> Floor seem to have affected the system.”

System?

“To escape the 60<sup>th</sup> Floor, no... To escape the Tutorial, he turned the 60<sup>th</sup> Floor into his private territory.”

Hearing more explanations only added to my chaos.

What are you talking about?

What’s happening?

“Right now... in theory...”

Kiri Kiri took a moment to calm her breath and said,

“In this Tutorial, the Hell difficulty’s 60<sup>th</sup> Floor no longer exists.”

# Chapter 112 - The Tournament (7)

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[Round 17, Day 25, 15:40]

[Welcome to the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor's waiting room.]

As soon as I entered the waiting room, I put away the armor inside the inventory and lie down on the bed.

The timing was not good for entering the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor anyway. Also, I didn't feel like training.

I just wanted to lay down and rest.

I didn't think I would feel this relaxed and at ease.

Anyway, I feel great.

Let's rest today like this and be lazy for a day, just for today.

I pulled up the blanket and thought about Lee Hyung-jin.

There was plenty of time left until he would reach the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor.

There was no reason for him to not able to beat the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor if he made preparations as planned.

No matter how big of difference in our abilities is, doesn't that mean he just need to work twice or three times harder?

Also, if I send him items I will get in higher floors too, he should be able to get past the floor.

I already thought about all these when I was at Kiri Kiri's field, but I organized them in my head once again.

It's all right.

It's possible.

Lee Hyung-jin will end up having tougher days ahead of him, but well, what else could we do?

He entered the Hell Difficulty, so he should just accept it as his

fate.

I brought out a chocolate bar from the inventory and tried to console myself.

I wonder why, but for some reason, I suddenly really want to eat sweet stuff.

I usually don't really care for sweets.

I only ate some when I ate cake with Kiri Kiri...

Um...

It could be that I just want to eat some sweets.

Let's just eat some chocolate and empty my head.

\*

When I woke up, it was the next day morning.

I thought I went to sleep around the dinner time last night...

I think this is the first time for me to sleep so soundly in the waiting room.

Yesterday, I ended up eating five chocolate bars before going to sleep.

It was the perfect behavior to turn into a pig.

However, it was no big problem.

It was not like my body was going to get fat from doing that.

The problem was...

Everything is such a bother. I mean everything.

Also, I keep on wanting to eat sweets.

I purchased a candy stick and put it in my mouth.

It tastes good.

Only if there was a gentle breeze...

How come this god damn waiting room is always inside a

building?

I wish I could sleep while feeling the breeze while lying on green grass.

If there was a warm sunlight for me to bathe on, that would be placing flowers on a table made of gold.

I should have napped at Kiri Kiri's field.

That's too bad. So, I decided to take nap at the waiting room's bed.

\*

I got up, and it was the next day.

Lately, why is it always the next morning when I close my eyes?

I thought it was strange, but I didn't think too much of it.

Instead, I ate soft ice-cream as I watched the community.

I spent the time like that for a long while, and eventually, even reading the articles on the community became a bother.

Like that, I went to sleep again.

\*

I got up, and it was the next day again.

Now, I could not help but to think it was weird.

Even though I had become relaxed a little, it was odd for me to waste my time away so much like this.

I wondered if I ever spent days away doing nothing like this inside the Tutorial.

Is it a mental illness?

If it is an illness due to stress, I think that is possible.

I checked the symptoms.

Everything was such a bother. I want to sleep, and I want to be

outside.

Also, I want to eat sweets.

In middle of all these, fortunately, my mind was still sharp.

Even if it is a mental illness, I literally feel like I'll go insane from the symptoms.

When did these start?

I was able to figure out the answer as soon as I thought about it.

It started from Kiri Kiri's field.

When I was not able to organize my thoughts and was in chaos, suddenly, all of my thoughts were organized perfectly.

After that, I sent a message to Lee Hyung-jin and explained the situation.

Next, I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri and came straight to the waiting room.

I didn't even think about getting more information from Kiri Kiri.

After entering the waiting room, I decided to organize my thoughts some more and rest.

Right after that, I felt that everything was such a bother.

Before this, I don't think I was feeling like that in particular.

I suddenly started to feel the desire to eat sweets.

It started right after I saw Kiri Kiri making scribbles on the ground.

My mind, which was in a disarray, became clean in an instant so that it would be easier for me to organize my thoughts.

After that, when my thoughts ended, these symptoms started to show up together.

Is it a form of magic?

If this is done by Kiri Kiri, then she was probably not intending any ill effects on me.

This is Kiri Kiri after all.

She probably did it, thinking it would help me.

I thought about main symptoms.

First, my head was calm. I could organize my thoughts with ease.

After that, it became such a bother for me to think.

Also, I developed a desire to sleep.

It does not make sense.

However, when I thought this was Kiri Kiri's doing, one thing crossed my mind.

Kiri Kiri had warned me about my stress several times in the past.

She said I need to rest by emptying my mind.

Of course, I did not listen to her.

Could it be that she forced me to rest with this method?

Also, she watched me getting stressed out, so I thought it was very likely that Kiri Kiri did so on purpose.

First, clear my mind and have me organize my thoughts once, and make me kick the idea of thinking about anything anymore and just rest.

That's plausible.

In middle of all these, there are also the desire for sweets and sun bathing. Thinking about them...

It is very Kiri Kiri like magic.

Of course, this is just my conjecture.

I should check again when I clear 18<sup>th</sup> Floor and meet Kiri Kiri.



What I should organize is that Kiri Kiri used a direct method on me, it is not to restrict me but to provide me with a form of help, and the fact that I cannot think of anything that was given as the payment for this help.

As for the last two things, in addition to asking Kiri Kiri, I think I should inform the Order of Vigilance.

Like that, I organized my thoughts and opened the message window.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: Do you have time?]

The reply didn't come right away.

Looks like I'll have to wait for a bit.

Maybe because I had been sleeping while not caring about anything for a few days straight, inside of my head was surprisingly peaceful.

I felt very refreshed as well.

I purchased a bag of marshmallow from the store and opened it, and the reply arrived.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: ...]

What is this?

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: What's up?]

Kim Min-hyuk kept silent without any reply for a moment.

I was able to get a response by the time I ate the third marshmallow.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Hey, why didn't you respond for so long? Why, why! Why in this critical timing... Why did you go silent all of the sudden!]

Ah...

It looks like he must have contacted me while I was asleep.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: I'm sorry. I was sleeping.]

For a long while, Kim Min-hyuk's hysteric messages continued.

He complained that he had way too much work that he was sick of them.

He complained how could I be taking naps in middle of all these and make him worry.

As I listened, I wondered if he was not trying to express his frustration but just wanted to complain to someone.

It's probably difficult for this rascal to complain about anything to anyone because of his position.

Thinking like that, I read his message and ate marshmallow.

It's delicious.

Would it taste even better if I roasted it on fire?

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Are you ready for the tournament?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: It's not like I need to prepare anything. I just need to wait for it.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: ... Damn it. I envy you.]

I told him the new information I obtained from the manager.

Kim Min-hyuk only said that he will record what I told him.

It seemed it was difficult for him to think about this side because he was so busy.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Anyway, from now on, don't go radio silent on me. Be on standby. Synch your sleep schedule as well. If anything happens, we will let you know.]

I sent a message to Kim Min-hyuk saying I understood. I closed the message window after that.

It seemed he was busy with preparing for the tournament.

I was embarrassed about myself for having spent the days doing absolutely nothing.

I should do something too.

The sense of bothersome-ness that surrounded my entire body had subsided to some extent now.

I still craved sweets, but it was not a problem for starting training.

First, I should start with magic.

To pick two most important information from what I obtained in the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, they are the Aura Blade and magic.

Fortunately, I was able to understand and execute the Aura Blade. However, it was different with magic.

Let alone understand it, I couldn't even get a feel for it.

The clues for taking a step forward was understanding the elemental type for using the wind arrow magic.

Also, as for the elemental type, I need to feel the sense of existence of the wind summon spirit to tell apart the feeling.

These two were the clues.

The first task was sensing the existence of the wind spirit who must be around me.

According to the wind spirit's blessing skill's description, the wind spirit was always around me. However, I was not able to feel the spirit.

First, I should figure out at least if cannot feel the spirit because I obtained the blessing when my senses were still lacking or if I'm just not able to feel the spirit.

Thinking that, I sat on the bed in meditation pose and focused my mind.

I increased my focus.

I brought back the feeling that I had when I was at the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor's Master Monk's room.

I isolated my mind inside the slowing time.

My senses were slowing down, and soon, it felt like I could not feel anything. My thought had accelerated that much.

Slowly, I tried hard to find my senses that could not be felt anymore.

Inside the time that was flowing slowly, I found a sense, and I found the other sense.

As I identified each sense that I found, I started to observe myself.

\*

[Round 17, Day 29, 23:55]

I had wasted a few days being lazy. However, I was able to spend the remaining days productively.

First, I was now able to somewhat sense the wind spirit.

It was difficult to notice the spirit at all because the spirit was with me through whole day everyday, but I could feel the presence becoming stronger when I received the blessing and acceleration effect from the wind spirit's blessing skill.

I focused on that presence and tried hard to be able to feel it at all times.

However, I was not confident about if I could call this presence as the elemental type.

Moreover, even if it is the elemental type...

What could I do with it if I did feel the elemental type?

It is not like I could do anything with it.

It was not like I could utilize it for something either.

I think I should be satisfied with this for the magic training and stop for now.

First, I should acquire the rune related magic textbook that's said to be obtainable after reaching the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor. After that, when I can understand the magic knowledge obtained from the doppelganger, I think I'll be able to resume magic training only after that.

Since then, until the round 17 ended, I spent the days practicing the utilization of the Aura Blade.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Are you all ready?]

Like I said before, I don't have anything to prepare.

It seems that he was asking out of habit.

I bet he is spreading the same questions to everyone beside me.

[The 18<sup>th</sup> Round is starting.]

[Round 18, Day 0, 00:00]

[The Tournament is commencing.]

[Please enter.]

[time let until the mandatory summon: 4 minutes 59 seconds.]

During the last tournament, I spent the time away and entered late in leisurely manner. However, it was different this time.

As soon as the message came, I activated the portal below me.

From the waiting room, I was transported to the place of the tournament. The place had bright sunshine. As soon as I got there, there were new messages.

[Please decide about your participation until the tournament starts. You can decide at the entrance of the arena.]

[Tournament Day 1, 00:00]

[You acquired the Tournament Rule Book (2). Please check the

inventory.]

[You acquired the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel Lv. 1. Please check your status window.]

I already heard from the Order of Vigilance that the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel was issued for free to everyone for the second tournament which was going to be held with servers from other countries.

Instead of reading the message, I moved first.

The strike division members of the Order entered the place as soon as the tournament started. They gathered up in their divisions and surrounded the main plaza, the place of summoning, in a large formation.

The scene setting for the second tournament was the 60<sup>th</sup> Floor's residential area.

The ground was made entirely of marble blocks. The main plaza had a highly decorative fountain.

The water fountain was made of an ivory color marble stone.

The buildings around here appeared to be made of stones instead of wood.

There were high rise buildings here and there. There were street lights on the streets as well. It seemed the place was made based on quite a developed world.

The buildings and the street were clean and sparkly. They looked pretty.

Also, there was bright sunlight which was raining down on us. It was the best.

The place could not be compared to the waiting room which made me feel confined.

I felt the urge to go on a stroll on the street.

Ah...

Why does the sunlight feel so good?

The gentle breeze also feels so great.

Could it be that the magic that Kiri Kiri placed on me still has some effects left?

I closed my eyes and enjoyed the happy feeling. When I opened my eyes, my eyes met with one of members of the Order.

He looked like he was panicking.

I cleared my throat by doing a fake cough and hardened the look on my face.

After a moment, the people really started to arrive at the tournament.

They are not from Korean server.

Other than the Order's strike division members, everyone else planned to arrive when there was only 30 seconds left until the mandatory summon.

The people who were arriving now were from the servers in foreign countries.

There were two foreign servers who were going to participate in the tournament with us.

It was fortunate that there were not many foreign servers.

If there were over ten foreign servers participating in the tournament, the Order of Vigilance would have had to give up on their plan or make serious adjustments.

The people from foreign servers were generally divided in Asian and Western worlds.

They were talking, but they all sounded Korean to me, so it was hard for me to tell which countries they came from.

They looked at the message windows, checked the status window

or inventory. They looked around to find others they knew.

While doing those, some found us, who were surrounding the main plaza.

Some started to voice their questions about us, and...

The members of Order of Vigilance all drew their weapons.



# Chapter 113 - The Tournament (8)

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The members of the Order of Vigilance surrounding the plaza drew their weapons, to which the people responded immediately.

Others who didn't initially notice the Order also drew their weapons and joined others around them who they knew.

Even those who just got summoned here also quickly evaluated the atmosphere and watched the situation.

It had been 18 rounds. I think there had been enough rounds to reveal the situation in their servers.

There were old people with white hairs. There were young children who didn't even appear to have reached the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. However, they were all wielding weapons and wary of the surrounding.

The Tutorial system did not care about age or gender.

During the early days of Tutorial, we saw the old or ill people in the system, which should be protected.

However, as the time went by a little, when strategy for even those people to get past the early stages safely, the situation had changed. Of course, the Hell difficulty was an exception.

People started to think that even old people can have power rivaling that of young people once they develop far enough.

Their aged body and slowed cognitive ability were covered by the system's adjustments and healing effects.

As for the children and teenagers who had not fully grown up, they also received adjustments for their smaller frames.

In Tutorial, a person's body frame and weight didn't have a significant impact on their raw muscular strength, so having a smaller frame was actually an advantage.

Having a smaller body meant it was that much harder for opponents to land a hit. Also, being shorter meant having lower center of mass. This greatly affected the outcomes of battles.

Soon, the gender also became meaningless.

Some people even claimed that women who were either casting-based mages or healers were at a greater advantage than the rest of the challengers.

Still, most of the Order's strike division were male.

Most of them were big and muscular men in 20 to 30s.

Although people could overcome their physical limitations through growth in Tutorial, still, the fact that they were ahead of the pack since the beginning could not be ignored.

It was only obvious that young men with relatively stronger bodies could adapt and develop faster than the rest.

Based on above, Kim Min-hyuk had a theory.

Unlike the young men's age group, old and ill require help until they can overcome their physical penalties.

Minimal amounts of food, information, equipment, potions and etc...

Also, the difference between the two groups starts to narrow only after such help is provided.

So, Kim Min-hyuk theorized that we could get a feel for the situations in other countries' servers by estimating this difference between the two groups and observing its state in each server.

Honestly, I didn't think it would work, but now that I am seeing the people from other servers for comparison with our own, I could not say that anymore.

Besides the Korean server, there were two more from other countries.

I still didn't know where they were from. One group was from an Asian country. The other one was from a Western country.

The Asian group drew their weapons and stayed alert at the surroundings. Everyone, regardless of gender or age, were ready to battle.

There were slight differences in the quality of equipment among the people, but that was about it.

However, only a few people of the Western country's group drew their weapons.

Even at a first glance, only the men with bulging muscles, dirty looks and tattoos, the kind that looked like street thugs were the ones with weapons.

Other than those people, woman, elderly or those who were weak didn't draw their weapons.

How could people in this server have developed so unevenly?

I could not even say that their developments were held back. It was more like these other people looked almost as if they were still just civilians with no experience in the Tutorial.

I'll have to find out about the exact cause, but it was hard to see this observation as something positive.

In the Western country's group, there definitely was a disparity among the people.

Also, it was so easy to tell them apart.

I could tell them from the weapons, armors, attitude, expressions on the faces and volume and tone of the voices.

I saw a fix like this before in Korean server.

The Order of Vigilance surrounded the main plaza so people won't scatter to outside of the place, but it was also done so we could deliver our message to them in one place.

We figured that people won't rush into battle without understanding the situation if everyone drew their weapons in a standoff like this. We figured that people would merge together among their groups and stay alert.

The first goal was to elect representatives from each group and start the conversation with them.

Of course, the whole arrangement was excessively rude as the mean for a conversation. However, nobody in the Order's strategic command opposed it.

We had less than 5 minutes until the rest of the people from the Tutorial were going to be summoned here by force.

We didn't want to risk having them being summoned suddenly and defenselessly into a chaotic battlefield. So, the Order decided that we should have the situation wrapped up before they arrive.

As we anticipated, the people from two foreign servers gathered up amongst themselves. We could identify the representatives among them as well.

Even if the particular individual didn't step forward, just from how people were glancing around, I could tell who had speaking authority and power.

After that, through conversations, we just need to explain ourselves and get to the next step based on their responses, but...

The Westerners were the problem.

The group was clearly divided in two. The differences in strength and class were also too obvious.

Moreover, even though people grouped together based on the servers, the Westerners who were not wielding any weapons didn't even think about going near those thugs-like bastards.

The situation didn't appear to be at the level of having something like the Representative Federation that once existed in Korean

server. It looked like a few thugs flexing their muscles around. However, I was certain that some of the Order's members must be seriously agitated to see this.

Right now, even Park Jung-ah was...

Um...

I turned to look at her. With a hardened face, she was watching the Westerners.

Because Park Jung-ah usually had emotionless look on her face, others didn't notice, but this was different from her usual look.

Her right hand's index finger was flickering. It looked like she was pulling the trigger to the handgun that she was not holding at the moment. It made me anxious.

Although it appears she got better lately, I could say that Park Jung-ah was the most extreme and dangerous person in this place.

I'm worried. This lass isn't just a little insane either.

Damn it.

Trouble is brewing from the most unexpected place.

I'm being painfully reminded about Kim Min-hyuk not joining us for the crowd control.

Even at this very moment, time is flowing. We now have less time until the mandatory summon.

In a situation like this where neither Park Jung-ah or Kim Min-hyuk can decide, I need to make the move.

I walked as I called Park Jong-shik.

"Big Bro, please handle the people over there. We will talk to the people over here first and join you afterwards. I think the people over here seem to be relatively stable."

I led Park Jung-ah toward the people as I hollered at Park Jong-shik.

“Cool your head. Let’s talk to those guys first.”

Park Jung-ah pointed at the Westerners with her eyes. However, I ignored her gaze.

“Later.”

For now, Park Jung-ah agreed with my response.

It was a wise choice of word.

I saw that Park Jong-shik took a part of the strike division members and was head to the Westerners. Meanwhile, with Park Jung-ah, I went to the Asian group. I checked that a few of the strike division members followed us and said to Park Jung-ah, “Should I talk?”

“It’s all right. I will.”

I turned to check if she was really up for it.

It seemed Park Jung-ah already found composure. She looked calm.

I was glad that it didn’t end up with me carrying out the conversation.

The people from Asian country were gathered at a side of the main plaza.

To be precise, they appear to be from Northeast Asia.

If I am to make a more specific guess, I think they are from Japan.

They had distinct characteristics for me to make that guess.

There were many people carrying a traditional Japanese sword.

Thinking about how useless it is to have a swordsman with just a longsword in a party battle, the ratio of people with that particular weapon was absurdly high.

I also checked out their other characteristics.

They are all gathered in one place, but they were not completely united.

I got a strong feeling that they were divided into smaller groups within.

It didn't look like they had a large organization that represented the server. It looked like they were gathered up in smaller groups from the same waiting rooms or party.

Still, it didn't look like they were weary of each other.

There were a few people who seemed to be solo players, but even such people all joined each other to form groups.

I think this is how students during overnight trips who got partnered up with friends look like.

Of course, this is just a guess, but this is how it feels like.

Instead of hostility, there were more people who looked anxious.

Still, their overall armaments are not bad.

There was someone who appeared to be the center of the people.

The man appeared to be in 30 to 40s.

One thing unique about the man was the long beard. Its length reached below his neck.

I don't get it.

He didn't look like the most influential leader of the group. He looked more like a popular high ranker.

Nobody was stopping him from stepping forward and standing in front of everybody else. However, he didn't have a group formed around him either.

Could it be that he was considered as the most powerful one in the server and ended up stepping forward because of it?

Maybe he is the emotional support and leader for the people of his server.

I should observe them more.

I don't know very well about their server, but they probably do have various choices in their swords' length and type. Despite this, the people here all had very similarly-shaped katana.

They were all similar to the one that man was holding. Even the sheath and armor were often similar.

Ah, that must be it.

Is he like the trend setter?

Even in the Korean server, for a brief time, a particular arrangement of armor or weapon became trendy or ridiculously popular.

The high rankers on higher floors were the ones who led such trends.

To say that such Korean rankers were famous people in SNS, I think that bearded old man is popular enough to be at the level of an idol?

There is nothing special about his appearance.

He just has a slightly sharp-looking face.

In that case, he must have leadership qualities in his abilities or personality.

Maybe he is popular because he is simply a funny guy in the community.

He is a unique one. I should learn more later.

"Excuse me, but could you please tell us your nationality?"

It was Park Jung-ah's question that started the conversation.

"If you think you should be excused, don't you think you should offer an apology first?"

The bearded old man retorted at Park Jung-ah.



As I thought, he didn't appear to be scared.

The translation by the Knowledge Before the Time of Babel is quite clean.

It was only at level one, so I was concerned that it might have been lacking in many ways.

For example, I thought the translation might have come like it was put into a translation machine.

However, the bearded old man's words were translated to perfect Korean.

Park Jung-ah ignored the man's retort.

"I'll get straight to the business."

Her attitude said she didn't give a damn about their nationality to begin with.

I'm actually curious though.

"Huh..."

The man was finding her response to be ridiculous. However, as if it was perfectly normal, Park Jung-ah didn't respond to the man.

"For the six days, while the tournament is taking place, we forbid all criminal activities in this place. Also, during the tournament, use of excessive cruelty against another participant and interfering with the opponent from declaring surrender are both forbidden."

"If anyone violates those rules?"

"That person will be punished. By us."

The man closed his mouth and looked up the sky for a moment.

It was not a gesture that had any meaning. It seemed he just wanted to organize his thoughts.

I thought the man would object and question our authority to oversee the situation, assess the weight of the crime and execute the punishment. I thought he would oppose the proposal.

Declaring to have the three authorities listed above was no different from declaring that we were going to stand above their heads.

We surrounded them as soon as they arrived and aimed our weapons against them. Only after that did we initiated the conversation. It must be difficult for anyone to acknowledge and accept proposal from such people.

However, instead of questioning these, the man asked something else.

“What’s the standard for judging the crime?”

“Based on common laws and ethics.”

The man stopped talking and started to stroke his beard.

For some reason, it was fun to watch him doing that.

“It is a good thing to forbid crime. I won’t object to that. I will cooperate. However, what if we discover a crime first? We have been dealing with crimes and punishments internally.”

What an optimistic old man he is.

We just met and tossed out a few words to express that we will punish anyone who commits crime. However, the man was responding to us as if it was a friendly negotiation.

We didn’t explain anything about the method of punishment or judging the crime. In such a situation, it would be only natural for anyone to be concerned that we might abuse our authority or have an ulterior motive.

Maybe this old man was also concerned about crime happening in the tournament where other servers join.

“If your side apprehend the criminal first and gives a suitable punishment, then we won’t punish the individual again.”

“Even if the criminal is from your side? How about setting different jurisdictions over people? Won’t that be better? If a

foreign criminal is apprehended, for example, then you should hand over the individual to the original group.”

“I refuse. Also, if you misjudge and attack an innocent individual, we could see that as an act of crime instead of justice.”

“I can say the same to you. All right. Let’s wrap it up here. However, if you make unreasonable demands to innocent people or try to frame someone, I won’t let it pass. Do not forget that you yourselves are included in the rules you proposed.”

“Do as you wish.”

She said ‘do as you wish.’

It didn’t mean that she understood or will keep it in mind.

It seemed the old man didn’t find any problem with her response. He just moved to the next subject.

Maybe he thought it was the limitation of the skill’s translation ability and was not thinking too much of it.

“Let’s postpone making detailed introductions of ourselves to each other. Let me say this to you once more. When everyone is summoned here by mandatory summon and everyone from all three servers are here, crime is forbidden. We should have chance to have a conversation after that. Well then, excuse me. I must go talk to the people on that side as well.”

Park Jung-ah said that as she pointed at the direction of the Westerners.

In the direction, the Westerners and Park Jong-shik were... Um... What the hell are they doing?

They were arguing.

“89<sup>th</sup> Floor! 89<sup>th</sup> Floor! You said the bastard among you who got to the highest floor is only at the 71th Floor? We have someone at the 89<sup>th</sup> Floor!”

# 89<sup>th</sup> Floor.

He was talking about Lee Chan-young's floor. He was at the highest floor in the Korean server.

“That’s just in the Easy difficulty! Isn’t that right? I am right, aren’t I? You are bragging about the Easy difficulty floor? We even have Hell difficulty challengers!”

My head is pulsating in pain.

Park Jong-shik and the bald head from the Western group were arguing as if they in kindergarten.

They looked like elementary school kids who were boasting stuff about what their family had, claiming to have a [golden toad](#) at home, someone's father being very high up, great grandfather owning a mountain in the countryside... and etc.

## Why in the world are they doing this?

“Hell difficulty... W... What floor?”

“6<sup>th</sup> Floor!”

In that instant, Park Jong-shik looked relieved. Also, he had the pompous look on his face as well.

Before the bald head man had the time to express his anger at Park Jong-shik, he turned to look at me.

Other Hard difficulty members of the Order all turned to look at me.

Even the Westerners all followed their gazes and looked at me.

“Hooooooooooooooooojaaaaaaaaaaaaaeeeeeee!! Right now!!!! Which floor did you say you were attttt?”

In incredibly loud voice that echoed through the main plaza, Park Jong-shik asked about my floor. I felt embarrassed.

[Basically the golden toad is a bearer of good news in Asian culture (Chinese, Korean, etc.) usually related to wealth. Here's a

[picture](#) if you need some fortune in your life.]

## Chapter 114 - The Tournament (9)

---

Of the westerners, the challenger of the Hell Difficulty's Six Floor was a very tall black man.

He looked sharp and quick. His arms and legs were a little too long. Those were his special characteristics.

He didn't have a weapon out either, so I could not figure out his class.

Compared to me, who reached the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor, being at the Six Floor may seem like not much, but he is still incredible given that he got to the Sixth Floor alive.

That incredible black man was glaring at Park Jong-shik with bloodshot eyes.

The argument was started by Park Jong-shik and his side, but I could see why he got infuriated. It was because he was the laughingstock of the argument.

It looks like the man is pointing at Park Jong-shik with an index finger and giving him a warning.

Of course, Park Jong-shik ignored the man.

“Hoooooooouujaeeeeeee! Sixth Floor! This runt says he is at the Sixth Floorrrrrr!”

Please.... Stop that already, big bro Jong-shik...

Why are you brining up my name?

At first, I was going to go to where Park Jong-shik was with Park Jung-ah. However, I stopped walking and just stood there.

I could not work up the courage to go over there.

Big Bro Jong-shik who was playing around like a child. Why is it my role to be embarrassed with him?

I turned to look at Park Jung-ah. It seems like she was not

interested in getting involved over there either.

“Here, a Hell Difficulty challenger at the Sixth Floor! Just one!”

The black man was talking quietly with his teeth clenched at first. Now, his voice was gradually getting louder.

It was not as loud as Park Jong-shik’s voice, which was echoing through the entire plaza.

I was going to intervene once the situation calmed down a little. However, it looked like the situation was only going to escalate if they were left to their devices.

I think I’ll have to get in there even if it is embarrassing, before even more humiliating situation comes.

“About that side... I’ll wrap it up and come back. Tell Kim Min-hyuk about the situation here and have him take over the command.”

There was no need for Park Jung-ah to go over there too and roll on the mud.

I should go there, organize and wrap it up.

“Yes, I will. Also, for captain Park Jong-shik... please say something to him.”

I definitely will.

I’ll let him have a piece of my mind.

I firmed my resolve and went to where Park Jong-shik was.

As I got closer, I could observe more of the scene there.

First of all, there was a clear divide amongst the westerners.

There were the people who looked like gangs, and there were the people who didn’t look like gangs.

Also, the people who were not gang members looked much brighter for some reason.

Second, the situation was a little different from what I expected.

I thought Park Jong-shik and the strike division members of the Hard difficulty were on a standoff against the westerners.

I thought it was odd that Park Jong-shik would engage in a childish argument with them and measure the size of their egos.

However, now that I went over there, I saw Park Jong-shik and the members of the strike division one-sidedly suppressing the other side.

They weren't having arguments.

It doesn't look like there were even physical struggles.

There was a substantial difference in their strength.

The strike division members next to Park Jong-shik were composed of almost all of the challengers from the Hard difficulty.

Except the few that were sitting around in First and Second Floors, the rest were strong enough to be placed in the strike division just based on the fact that they survived.

Such people were organized into groups of three or ten and arranged in a formation to surround the westerners.

Behind them were other members of the strike division from other difficulties who were holding their ground.

Also, they all came here because they thought there could be a battle here.

On top of this, the westerners were not completely unified as one.

Because the situation was not in their favor, most of westerners were watching, maintaining a distance.

Also, the look on people's faces were all different.

I don't think all that many would step up if a battle broke out.

Given the situation, it seems Park Jong-shik decided to surround



them and yell at them instead of trying to negotiate with them.

The thug-like ones were in power here. So, I think this might be actually more effective.

While Park Jong-shik was yelling at and suppressing the thugs, the bald white man who appeared to be their leader started to talk about their challengers of his server to show off their power. I think that must be how the argument started.

After that, Park Jong-shik struck back with his belittling attitude.

I understand the situation now.

However, is there a reason to look down on them so much?

“Big Bro.”

“Ohhhh! Our Ho-jae is here! Good, Ho-jae. Tell us what floor.... Kek.”

With his arm around my shoulder, Park Jong-shik started to yap away loudly so much that it made my ear hurt. I jabbed him in his waist with my elbow so nobody would notice.

“Big Bro. Please. This is embarrassing. What are you doing? If anyone else saw this, they will think you are the thug here.”

Park Jong-shik held his waist where I jabbed him. I told him quietly at his ear, and he turned around along with me, his arm still around my shoulder.

“Big Bro, did you deliver them all of the message?”

“Of course.”

He was cringing. It seemed his side was hurting. He explained in whispers.

“I explained it all, and they even said that they understood. They were not being cooperative. So, we drew our weapons and threatened them to get with the program.”

It looks like he really threatened them.

“In that case, you did everything you were here to do. Why were you having such childish arguments?”

“I thought it would be good to squash their pride a little.”

Um...

Having heard that it was necessary, I momentarily paused.

Park Jong-shik was an honest man.

He was not the kind to cause a problem and then justify it afterwards. He would have apologized instead if he caused a problem without a proper justification.

“Please explain.”

The westerners said they were from Australia.

Park Jong-shik explained to me what his impressions were when he met the people who came up as the Australian’s representatives.

“From how I saw them, it seems they are just street thugs. They threaten the people around because they are just a little stronger and think they are great by watching others shrivel in fear. On top of this, they are trapped inside a world where there are no laws or police, so I bet they had been committing evil acts like there was no tomorrow.”

I agree with that opinion.

“When it comes to facing such bastards, you need to completely kill their spirit and step firmly on them. We need to plummet their status to the ground all the way. Only then will the other people be able to start seeing these thugs as something pathetic and obstacles that they could overcome. Only then, the other people will be able to think about resisting them.”

You really were treating them as if they were street thugs...

I think my head is throbbing with headaches.

Like many challengers in Korean Tutorial server, these people also had real powers, not ordinary powers, but the kind that could be easily justified supernatural.

It was not like I could think of anything to say back to Park Jong-shik.

Park Jong-shik also said that the people on the back started to brighten up as he pressed down on the thugs and expressed their satisfactions quietly.

Because he noticed it, Park Jong-shik said he worked more diligently in crushing the thugs.

“Our guys thought it was fun to watch too.”

I understood how Park Jong-shik was feeling.

I could even accept that it was not wrong.

Still.

“Why did you have to drag me into this argument so deeply? You embarrassed the hell out of me.”

Park Jong-shik laughed it off and apologized. I gave him a dirty look and turned around.

As he said, it looked like the bald head and the other thugs were completely suppressed.

For some reason, I was disappointed.

It would be awkward to scold them and lecture them later if they are already like this.

I think they are more anxious now instead of when Park Jong-shik was still excited and raising his voice.

There was one person who was still burning with animosity toward us. The man was glaring at us.

He was the black man who was at the Sixth Floor of the Hell difficulty.

He was seething with anger, huffing and puffing through the nose. He looked like a volcano that was about to erupt.

Now that I think about it, this guy is the biggest victim of the circumstances here.

I felt a little sorry for the man. Meanwhile, I was glad to see another challenger from the Hell Difficulty, so I decided to greet the man at least.

“From the Sixth Floor of the Hell Difficulty? Are you...”

Now that I think about it, the Korean pronunciation for the “Are you” sounds similar to the N-word that should not be said.

Well, it probably won’t matter. It will translate.

... Will it?

The man’s face was completely crumpled. It was surprising.

Why does he look way more infuriated now?

Ah...

Because I was thinking just now, I didn’t continue my words after saying ‘Are you.’ Hence, it was not translated.

“Die, you son of a bitch!”

The man charged at me.

The translation is pretty good.

The man threw a fist at me. I caught it, twisted it around his back and struck him in his waist.

The black man yelped and instantly quieted down.

I released his wrist that I was holding. He fell to the floor and started to shake.

Oh my...

I had been practicing Aura Blade a lot lately. Perhaps because of that, I instinctively wrapped my fist with aura and struck him with

it.

Of all places, I struck him right on the waist... Ah... I think his internals might have been busted.

“Are you all right?”

He did not look all right.

“Big Bro. Please give a potion to this friend here. It’s my fault, so we should give him a potion at least.”

Park Jong-shik nodded in agreement. I moved my gaze away and looked at the bald man.

“Your name?”

“... David.”

The man looked very anxious.

The black man that he was counting on was knocked out in one strike. It seemed David was pretty shocked.

“You heard that all crimes are forbidden for the next six days while the tournament takes place, right? You also heard about the cautionary rules during the tournament matches as well, right?”

“I’ve heard.”

Why is this rascal’s reply so short?

He had been quietly responding, but something about the man’s attitude was not to my liking.

“Well then, answer me again. Tell me that you guys won’t perpetrate crime, and you guys will actively cooperate with preventing crime and prosecuting criminals.”

These guys are not like the bearded man I met earlier. Instead of stopping crimes, I think these bastards are more likely to actively lead committing crimes.

I think that will do to straighten them out.

David... the bald head glanced at the man next to him before he answered.

The man had long curly hair although he was a man. It was unique.

The curly haired man lightly nodded, and David also said they understood.

Oh, look at this.

There was a leader who turned out to be someone else in all this? I think I'll have to remember that guy with full-blown curly hair.

\*

All Tutorial challengers from Korea, Japan and Australia were gathered at the main plaza.

With all of them there, Park Jung-ah informed them that all criminal acts were forbidden for the next six days. She also explained the cautionary rules during the free time, tournament matches and spectating.

As for me, I was chatting away with Kim Min-hyuk, standing next to the platform where Park Jung-ah was standing.

"I can understand why Japan is included since it is a neighboring country, but why Australia? What's the connection?"

Of course, we didn't know.

Instead of thinking deeply about it, I brought out a candy stick from the inventory.

"I thought you usually ate meat jerkies for snacks? Not just snacks, I thought you literally only ate meat jerkies and water?"

"You have any idea how long ago that was? Nowadays, I've been eating all sorts of things. Ah, I'm not eating this candy is not because I want to eat it."

"Then why?"

“I told you that I think the manager might have put a spell on me, right? It’s that.”

“Is there a magic that makes you want to eat candy?”

“Apparently so.”

It was around that time. Someone in the plaza started to mouth off.

“What bullshit. They are just showing off their dicks...”

There were bastards like these once in a while.

I pinpointed my Overwhelm skill at the individual and shut him up.

Each country showed clearly different responses to Park Jung-ah’s speech and guidelines.

The people from Korean server seemed to be just listening.

It was not like it had been only a few days where the Order of Vigilance stepped in and acted so overprotectively like this.

Some from Korean server found it amusing that the Order was going to such lengths even with foreigners mixed in the tournament.

As for the people from the Japanese server, they usually possessed one of the two reactions.

Unlike the initial violent atmosphere at the plaza, they were relieved to hear the speech which expressed that crimes are forbidden and that we were requesting cooperation to bring about a safe atmosphere through the tournament. Some were naïve like that.

There were others who became anxious instead, after seeing the Order.

The problematic responses were mostly from the Australian server’s people.

It seemed the thugs held the most power to tried to voice their opinions.

So, they continued to attempt to speak against the contents of the speech, and I had to continue to use the Overwhelm skill in order to allow Park Jung-ah to speak uninterrupted.

Anyway, it looks like they don't have a unified organization that oversees the entire server like we do.

It looks like the people from Japanese server are all divided into groups the size of small parties.

Still, they had the bearded man who was stepping up, and he seemed to have some support by the people, but it was not like he was representing the entire server. It was more like the parties or groups each elected a representative and came to discuss with the bearded man.

It seems like they never experienced the day of the great harmony properly either.

I should learn more about this later.

As for the Australian server, they have quite a number of large groups.

The problem was that their main groups seemed to be of the shady kinds.

It seemed the group where the bald head and the black man belonged to was the largest group there.

It was not like they had the most number of people, but they had the highest levels.

“Hey, about the people from Japan. Why are so many of them carrying Japanese swords? Isn't that supposed to be difficult for beginners to handle?”

“It is difficult to handle.”

They are ridiculously hard.



When I was picking my starting weapon, I tried holding the Japanese sword once and crossed it out from my list of potential weapons.

After that, I found a shorter weapon that seemed easier to handle.

On top of this, the Japanese swords that the people wielded were quite long.

They were not the kind that beginners could wield and swing.

Let's assume someone who just entered the Hard Difficulty only had one of these swords.

I'm sure that would double that person's chance of dying on the first stage.

"By the way, did they tell you why so many of them have those swords?"

"I think it is not that they picked those swords as the starting weapon. Perhaps there are some who did. I think most people purchased the swords as a fashion statement. When actual combat starts, they might put away the sword and bring out the actual weapons they really use."

"Fashion statement? I am not sure? I don't think that could be? You know how expensive it is to purchase a weapon."

"Look at them. People who are wielding Japanese swords all have them on their waist instead of placing them inside the inventory. I am saying that might be a trend right now."

We chattered about this unusual topic and spent the time. Before long, Park Jung-ah's speech was nearing its end.

"... You must not unilaterally decide the bounds of rules. I'll say this once again before finishing this. All criminal activities during the six days through the tournament are forbidden. As long as this rule is earnestly followed by everyone, there won't be any

problems.”

Although it is a rule that even we might have a hard time following, that is.

# Chapter 115 - The Tournament (10)

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[You have passed the first preliminary match of the individual round.]

[Would you like to move to the spectator seat?]

Like the last time, the first preliminary match was defeating seven of mountain goblins from Hell Difficulty.

I had no trouble clearing it. I went to sit at the spectator seats.

It was not like I had anything to do before the second preliminary match started.

I sat at the seat and watched the other participants mingling with the goblins, but Park Jong-shik came to me.

“Hey. Have you finished the first preliminary match?”

“Of course. What about you, Big Bro?”

“I finished it.”

Before Kim Min-hyuk left, he said one of us, myself and Park Jong-shik that is, should not participate in the individual tournament and be on watch duty.

Also, as if it was the obvious thing to do, both of us did not listen.

Kim Min-hyuk probably anticipated as much too.

He probably said it just for the sake of it.

Besides me and Park Jong-shik, there are other members of the Order who are posted all over the stadium as watchdogs.

No matter what happens, I just need to finish my match and come and resolve the problem.

“I hope everything will go along smoothly without problems.”

“I am not sure.”

Park Jong-shik muttered while sitting next to me.

I don't think it won't go so smoothly without problems.

We may have set the rules for the people to follow, but there are plenty of bastards who would desire to perpetrate evil while staying around the borderline of the limits.

Such bastards had been trapped in the Tutorial stages and waiting rooms all this time, and now, they got to be in a place with many people. I don't think they would stay quiet.

I'm certain someone will cause problems.

The key point would be how many of such incidents would happen.

Also, to reduce the number of incidents, the critical factor would be how we handle the very first incident.

“Ho-jae. Are you not going to participate in the group matches?”

“That's right. While I'll be participating in the individual and faction matches, I decided not to enter the group matches.”

“Ku... I wish I could enter the faction matches.”

“Big Bro, you get to enter the individual and group matches.”

The faction matches were a new type of match that was added for the second tournament.

The second tournament is held over total of six days.

The individual matches were held for the first and second days. The group matches were held during third and fourth days.

As the finale, the faction matches were held during the fifth day. The sixth day consisted of free activity time.

Individual matches literally involved each individual participating in the matches alone against another participant. The group matches involved parties of 13 or fewer people. The faction matches were literally allowing entire members of factions to participate together.

Here, the factions meant the servers.

I brought out the rule book and checked the rules about faction matches.

[Tournament: Rule book (2)]

[Factions Matches]

- There is no limit on the number of participants.
- Anyone from the participating factions can enter.
- Challengers from a faction can be recruited into a different faction.
- The faction with fewest number of people will win the first match by default and move to the final match directly.

These are incredible rules.

These mean that it does not matter if there are one hundred or two hundred members in a faction.

The title of the matches was becoming of its directions.

On top of that, there is even a rule there which states that we could even recruit someone from another faction.

Before the tournament, the Order of Vigilance already had obtained information about the faction matches and analyzed it.

First, with faction matches, it becomes possible to form a group that includes an entire server.

It is meaningful in the way that it joins an entire server's challengers into one and encourages them to unite their opinions.

Also, recruiting other challengers from other factions is possible. This way, the challengers from a mainstream faction will have the new opportunity of deciding whether to join another faction. Also, by forming a team with another faction, it allows an opportunity for cross-server interactions.

I thought the rules for faction matches were quite something.

“Still, if possible, I would like to win rewards from all three kinds

of matches. During the last tournament, I didn't get to win any in the end."

That's true.

They took all of the rewards from the last tournament.

"Still, there is the reward from winning the overall tournament as a faction. Please be satisfied with that and the group matches' winning reward."

"Huh? That's not right, no? I intend to win the individual matches as well?"

"Yes, yes. I'm sure you will. If I suddenly develop diarrhea and forfeit the individual matches that is."

Park Jong-shik was burning with a fighting spirit, saying he will pay me back for the last tournament.

It seemed he obtained a new super move.

Or perhaps he refined an old technique.

The overall tournament win was given to the server that produced the most number of winners throughout the matches. There were rewards given to the entire server for being the winning server.

According to what we found from managers, the reward was a special medicine that allowed the challenger to raise the stat of a desired attribute by five points, which was incredible.

Except at the very beginning, the only way for challengers to raise their stats was leveling up. Considering that it becomes progressively harder to level up as one's level increases, it was a great reward.

As an additional note, for the duration of the tournament, the challengers who join other servers for the faction matches are considered as a part of the other servers that they joined.

Looking at the overall tournament win's rules remind me of the

sports day tournaments during elementary school.

There were rewards for each kind of matches. Also, there was overall reward for the team that won the entire tournament.

Well, back in the elementary school days, all we got for a reward were applauses and the sense of accomplishment of winning.

“I think everyone is enjoying this.”

“I seems so.”

The first preliminary match was just defeating the seven goblins, but many challengers were passionately and giving it their all in the matches.

There were rewards for points if the challengers won the second preliminary match or every time they won a match during the main matches. So, even if they were not aiming for winning the overall individual matches, many people participated in the individual match.

However, because the goblins were from the Hell Difficulty, there weren't many people who could win easily.

Even rankers at high floors, depending on their specialization, were having difficulty winning by themselves.

Also, there was a man who was doing the quite the opposite and staying in the arena even though he could win.

It was Lee Hyung-jin.

He didn't attack the goblins at all. Instead, he only focused on evading.

He was almost completely surrounded by the seven goblins. Minimizing his movements, he was barely evading the goblins' attacks.

I think he is doing that because he will not have anything in particular to do after winning the first preliminary match. He must be at it for the sake of training.

It looks like he intends to continue until the time limit is up.

He sure is diligent at it.

After he heard about the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor, I thought he might have been forsaken and give up.

However, looking at him like this, a most of my worries are gone. I should go talk to him later.

“Big Bro, about that kid.”

“Lee Hyung-jin?”

“Yes. If you end up fighting against him in the tournament matches, be tough with him and teach him a lot of things.”

Lee Hyung-jin was one of the top challengers, even among all three servers combined.

He probably won't lose. He probably will continue to go up.

If he ever runs into me in the main matches, I should tell him not to surrender so quickly.

When it comes to learning, one learns faster while getting hit.

Park Jong-shik was supporting my chin on my palm and looking down at the arena. He said, “By the way, overall, the people are pretty weak.”

He was talking about the challengers from Japan and Australia.

“Now that you mentioned it, that's true. Their overall skills are less refined than I thought.”

Before the tournament begun, there were talks in the community. People said the overall height of the skills among everyone else were probably on the high side.

I thought so too.

The Korean server had many advantages. Thanks to these, I thought the average growth overall would be high.



This was true.

The problem was that the differences with other servers were too great.

A lot of the people from Japan and Australia were failing in the first preliminary matches.

I think the greatest advantage in the Korean server is the cooperation between the high floor rankers and newbies on the lower floors.

The low floors are relatively easy to clear. So, the low floor challengers have many opportunities to obtain information when meeting the managers.

So, the high floor rankers gave information for free to the newbies.

Also, the high floor rankers obtained more and more points as they rose up through the floors, giving them more allowances for other things with points. Using the points, they actively supported the newbies with equipment and potions.

Like that, newbies were able to progress through early stages without lacking anything in particular. So, during their meetings with managers, they asked for information that the high floor rankers needed instead of about the lower floors.

So, the high floor challengers can obtain the information needed for beating higher floors easily through this arrangement.

I think this interdependent relationship reduced the fatality rate among the newbies and improved the conquest speed of the high floor rankers.

Also, to add efficiency and trust in this relationship, the Order of Vigilance have been the bridge between challengers.

During party play, there weren't many disputes or accidents among the challengers. It was obvious that this contributed to

higher overall levels for everyone in the Korean server.

Still, the difference between servers was far larger than I initially expected.

I think upper matches will be filled mostly by the people from the Korean server.

“You know. They say Korean people are good at games. Could something like that have an effect?”

“Um... I am not sure. As a former professional gamer, I would like to agree on that.”

Compared to other countries, in Korea, many youth play video games starting at a young age. I think that might have influence on this.

The Tutorial system has a lot of similarities with game elements.

Those that are used to games will adapt to the Tutorial faster.

“Well, I’m sure there are various reasons. Perhaps we just happen to have lots of talented people entering the Tutorial in the Korean server.”

I brought out caramel popcorn from the inventory.

Kiri Kiri’s magic’s effect is still lingering with me.

The number of people finishing the first preliminary matches and being moved to the spectator’s seat was growing.

The situation was moving along so peacefully that I could eat popcorns at ease.

“Hey, look over there. Are those guys trying to flirt?”

I looked at where Park Jong-shik was pointing at. At the spectator seat, a few of the Korean challengers were hitting it off with a few Japanese women.

Park Jong-shik was staring at them.

“What is it? Are you envious?”

“Yeah, I am envious. I am eating popcorn with a dude, but they are playing around with foreigners.”

It seemed Park Jong-shik was envious. Unlike him, I was happy to see them like that.

The situation is good.

Despite the fact that we were in a special environment called Tutorial, the Korean server's situation was maintained at a bright level.

Also, it seemed the Japanese server was just as good.

The people from Australia are not doing so bad either.

The mood is different and varies between the individuals and groups.

The water was slushed with mud because bastards from thugs like organizations are holding the main power, but it seemed the others who are not related to them seemed to be doing fine for now.

As for the problematic bastards... Even at a glance, they seemed like they were going insane from being watched by the members of the Order who were all around the arena.

Are their bodies itching because they have to sit quietly?

“I think I'll have to strike them down.”

“I think so too.”

Neither Park Jong-shik nor I had to mind the method.

As for the bastards that deserved a good beating, Kim Min-hyuk was going to bring them on his own.

I just needed to focus on giving them a taste of death.

\*

[The second preliminary matches will begin for the individual rounds.]

[Would you like to participate?]

“Participate.”

The first preliminary matches were held through the morning. After a brief break, the second preliminary matches begun.

For this one, each challenger had to fight another random challenger. After achieving victory against three matches, the challenger could participate in the main matches.

A challenger could continue trying to get three wins in the second preliminary matches even after losing once, so this reduced the likelihood of anyone getting disqualified so soon because of having bad luck and running into someone incredibly strong.

Of course, if anyone was extremely unlucky, then it was possible for that person to run into multiple powerful challengers.

[The match will begin after 30 seconds.]

[Current number of wins: 0]

A challenger was summoned on the opposite end of the arena to where I was standing.

He was a Korean.

“Dear Heavenly Farther, how come I always have rotten luck? I had been praying diligently too.”

“Hey, how could you say such things when I’m right here? That hurts.”

It was [Kim Gyoung-jin](#), a Hard Difficulty challenger.

He was one of the people from the early days of the Tutorial.

Unlike others from the Hard Difficulty, he was not related to the Order of Vigilance. However, he had an obsessive presence on the community boards, so he did not feel unfamiliar.

Actually, we have occasionally chatted through the community since the early days.

He was not afraid of me. He was easygoing enough so that he was comfortable around me.

“Of all people, how come I have to face against the Great King of Hell?”

Who is the Great King of Hell? Who.

“Let’s hurry. I want to lose fast and challenge again.”

It seemed Kim Gyoung-jin already lost the will to fight.

[The match will begin.]

I charged forward as soon as the message appeared.

It seemed like Kim Gyoung-jin was sure that he was going to lose, but I am not sure.

If he was really intending to lose right away, then he would have declared surrender right away.

It is obvious that I have a higher chance of winning, but that does not mean I can win carelessly.

No matter how it is, he is a Hard Difficulty challenger. Also, among all challengers here, he is counted among the strongest.

I was charging forward. He threw two daggers in succession directly at me.

I caught the first dagger and swung it to strike away the second dagger.

I approached him and swung the dagger at him.

It was at that moment. He suddenly disappeared.

[Battle Focus]

I raised my senses to look around.

Kim Gyoung-jin was standing behind me.

He was at where the dagger that I struck away was at.

I quickly turned around.

“Hup!”

He threw the dagger at me again.

This time, the dagger was covered in black energy wobbling around the surface.

It’s a skill.

I don’t know what kind of power it has, so it would be better for me to dodge it instead of blocking it.

I lowered my body and dodged the dagger.

At that time, the dagger that I was holding shook intensely.

I instinctively let go of the dagger and tried to get away from it.

After that, Kim Gyoung-jin appeared in front of the dagger that I dropped.

[Iron Wall]

He grabbed the dagger that I released right away. He promptly tried to stab my heart with it.

Fortunately, I used the Iron Wall.

Kaang!

The dagger was blocked by my arm.

I could counter right away, but I decided to gain some distance first.

I am dumbfounded.

It is not like you are the Yellow Flash of the Leaf Village. How come you are using the dagger as the medium for teleportation?

“Wow... That really was ridiculous. Is that really the reaction time of someone who was caught off guard?”

Kim Gyoung-jin placed his hands on his waists and sighed over and over.

“I showed you this much of my secret techniques. Won’t it be

polite for you to fall for it a little?”

“Polite? Do dogs have horns? That’s a power skill, isn’t it?”

He nodded.

Now, gradually, people with power skills were appearing.

First there was Park Jong-shik, and now there was Kim Gyoung-jin.

Including myself, there were three.

Kim Gyoung-jin pointed at his arm and asked,

“That is a power skill too, isn’t it? You blocked my dagger with bare arm when it even had a skill applied to it when I swung it. That surprised me.”

It isn't a power skill.

[Author said Kim Gyoung-jin is formerly known as Lee Jin-suk in past chapters. He said he changed the name because there was another character who had a name very similar to Lee Jin-suk and caused confusion.]

# Chapter 116 - The Tournament (11)

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That's not a power skill.

I was hesitant about telling him this. In the end, I decided not to tell him.

During the skirmish just now, he used his trump card, yet he was still unable to deal damage to me. However, it seemed he was satisfied with how it played out. He looked proud.

I didn't want to hurt his pride.

It was not like I was a weirdo who drew twisted pleasure from harassing others.

I should just let him think whatever he wants.

"Kuhum. Hm."

Kim Gyoung-jin cleaned his throat and said in a quiet voice, "Hey... The thing is... How about you play along for a bit?"

I wondered what he was talking about. I just stared at his face for a moment. He casually glanced toward the spectators to point at them.

Ah, I understood it.

It seemed he wanted to have a match that appear to be intense and evenly matched.

One unique thing about Kim Gyoung-jin was that he was obsessed with the community's perception of him and the people around him.

He was a ranker at the high floor who continued his path of rising to the floors above. Plus, his source of growth was being praised by the people in the community and idolized.

That's right. Kim Gyoung-jin is an attention addict.

If he had a cool duel against me in the tournament, that would



naturally improve his reputation in the community.

Kim Gyoung-jin will encourage the public opinion towards that direction as well.

It won't be bad for me either.

To start with, it would be hard for me to run into anyone as strong as him in the preliminary matches.

While I'm at it, it would be more fun to play with an opponent who has some skills.

Kim Gyoung-jin was one of the few who were not afraid of me and close to me.

Also, back in the early days of Tutorial, when nobody believed me in the community, he supported me.

It is late now, but I should cooperate as a way of expressing my gratitude.

I nodded, and Kim Gyoung-jin's face brightened.

How should I play this out?

If I just go easy on him, then it won't be fun.

I should fight normally, but place a restraint on some things. That would work better.

How about an arm and a leg?

No. If I don't use one of my legs, then that would kill my mobility.

That would stagnate my way of handling the battle. It won't result in cool spectacle that Kim Gyoung-jin wants to produce.

Let's just not use either of my arms.

"In that case, here I come again."

At that instant, Kim Gyoung-jin disappeared.

He must be behind me.

He must have moved behind me, to where the dagger with black energy flew towards me.

Instead of turning my gaze to the back right away, I focused mana to my leg and struck the floor.

Kuuuuung

With the sound, the arena's floor developed a huge crack.

Usually, striking a floor results in a crack near the strike point or just ends up having the foot getting stuck at the floor.

However, because I applied mana to cover a wide area below my foot, this happened.

It was not like I knew this would happen.

I tried it out because I wondered what would happen. It worked.

Actually, the move didn't really have much significance to the battle.

I did it because I thought it would look cool for people to see from the distance.

After that, Kim Gyoung-jin was charging at me. I threw a reverse roundhouse kick at him.

He immediately slowed, lowered his body and dodged it.

Is it a skill?

I could hear the people from the spectator seats roaring in excitement.

Right after I struck the floor with my foot and shattered the arena's floor, I threw a kick at Kim Gyoung-jin's head. I'm sure it looked dangerous.

The effect is incredibly dramatic.

Kuuuuu.... I'm even minding the special effects for the production. It is a top-notch Ho-jae service.

As soon as Kim Gyoung-jin dodged the kick. He readied his dagger and charged into close range.

He calmly dodged the kick which came at him like a surprise attack. Instead of shriveling at its overwhelming power, he charged in instead.

I was satisfied with his skills and mental fortitude.

As I stepped back, I swung my leg at him while aiming for just below his knees.

Kim Gyoung-jin responded to this with little room to spare. He successfully dodged it by gaining distance.

Kim Gyoung-jin and I exchanged attacks.

He dodged my kicks, while I dodged his dagger.

We each repeated the cycles of attacks and evasions.

When the pattern seemed to be getting a little boring, I jumped up high and tried a drop kick.

Of course, it was a move with a large windup motion. Kim Gyoung-jin dodged it with ease. Once again, I brutally struck the floor.

The arena floor was destroyed once again.

Now, the cracked crater reached the outer bounds of the arena.

Watching this, the people exploded with shouting.

This is fun.

I did say Kim Gyoung-jin is an attention addict, but actually, I love being showered by the spectators' attention while being on the stage.

It seemed Kim Gyoung-jin was thinking it was about time we should end this. He spread two daggers to the air and threw another at me.

I dodged it and charged in toward him.

As soon as he disappeared, I tried to predict where he went.

Using my skill, I moved to one of the daggers that were spread to the air.

I came right at him without delay, and he disappeared again.

There were two daggers thrown to the air.

Also, he cannot move to a dagger that he just used.

Keeping those two limitations in mind, I predicted Kim Gyoung-jin's next destination.

[Blink]

As soon as I used the Blink to move, I saw Kim Gyoung-jin right in front of my eyes. I threw a flying dropkick at him immediately.

“Queak.”

How he croaked was unbecoming of the cool duel. With that, he was thrown off the arena.

He had been fighting so well. Did I ruin his cool image at the end?

However, Kim Gyoung-jin had a proud look on his face. He gave me a thumb up and was moved to the spectator seats.

[You achieved your first victory in the second preliminary matches.]

[Current number of wins: 1]

It was fun.

It was a new experience to fight under the gazes from the people. Kim Gyoung-jin's main method of attack were based on teleportation skill, quick body movements, and close range projectiles. It was also fun to fight him using just my legs.

The battle was not brutal, but it was about as fun as playing a game on a phone for a short while.

It would be nice if the next opponent was also someone who was

pretty strong.

[Would you like to start your second duel?]

“Yes.”

[Please wait until the opponent is decided.]

With that message, I was sent to the spectator seats.

The second duel didn't start right away.

It seemed that everyone was already in middle of their own duels, so there wasn't anyone who could participate.

I was sitting and waiting for a moment, and a new message appeared.

[You were matched with an opponent.]

It is like queueing in to find a match on an online game.

[The duel will start 30 seconds later.]

With the message, I was moved to the arena.

It was the same place that I was at the last time. However, the floor that was ruined and shattered was completely repaired.

The next opponent was also a Korean.

Again, the opponent was someone I knew.

It was Lee Yu-jung. I once even formed a party with her during the first tournament's group matches.

“H... Hello...”

It seemed she seriously panicked.

I think she is still afraid of me.

I thought we have become quite close, but perhaps I was mistaken.

Maybe it is just that she was frightened after seeing the exaggerated duel between me and Kim Gyoung-jin.

I felt awkward after greeting her face to face like this.

What should I talk about for the next 30 seconds?

“Jung-ah didn’t participate, did she?”

“That’s right. She had things to do, so...”

We talked a little about Park Jung-ah. After awkwardly asking how each other were doing, 30 seconds had passed.

Just before the start message appeared, Lee Yu-jung said, “I... I’ll just surrender. I think it would be better to aim for a second chance...”

“Yes. Please do.”

[The match will start.]

“I surrender.”

With that, she disappeared.

[You have won your second match in your second preliminary matches.]

[Number of wins: 2]

[Would you like to start your third duel?]

“Yes.”

[Please wait until your opponent is decided.]

I was moved to the spectator seats again.

Ugh. That was disappointing.

The next one better not fizzle out like this.

During the first day, only the first and second preliminary matches were done.

In other words, the second preliminary matches were the last events for the day.

If I get my third win because the next opponent just gives up

right away, then that means I won't have anything else to do.

"Was that your second?"

"Yes."

Park Jong-shik was sitting next to me. He asked.

He was pouting in disappointment.

"What about you, Big Bro?"

"I got my three wins already."

"Already?"

"I kept on getting small fries."

While I waited for the matching, I watched other people with Park Jong-shik and struck a conversation.

"That guy sure is good."

"Who? Ah, Lee Jun-suk. He is good. If he entered the Tutorial during the first round, then he would have been rated higher than now. His abilities are being underestimated both in the community and in the Order of Vigilance. His floor level is not very high in comparison to the top floor challengers. Also, he is not someone from the first round of the Tutorial."

Actually, Lee Jun-suk was highly evaluated by the community and the Order. Park Jong-shik was saying that he was still underestimated in comparison to his true abilities.

"I wish I could be matched up against him."

"That would be fun."

The waiting is pretty long.

I wondered why it was taking so long. I looked around, and I realized why.

There were quite a few people at the spectator seats who were watching me.

It seemed they were all waiting so they could avoid being matched up against me.

Ugh.

[Kim Myung-min, 24<sup>th</sup> Floor: 14<sup>th</sup> arena, second row, first arena. I think there will be a problem there.]

One of the members of the Order who was watching the arenas sent us a message.

I'm sure the message was sent to everyone, including Park Jong-shik and other Order members around him.

I looked for the arena in the message.

There were several dozens of arenas where duels were taking place, so it would have been hard for us to identify the exact arena with the problem if we didn't get the message.

In fact, although Park Jong-shik and I were watching the matches, we didn't notice what was happening in the 14<sup>th</sup> arena.

The two challengers on the 14<sup>th</sup> arena appeared to be two men who were both warriors.

The duel was one sided.

One man was extremely eager and was beating the crap out of the other one.

I sharpened my senses and observed what was happening.

"I surren.... Khuuuk! Kuk."

Stopping someone from saying the words was easier than expected.

When struck on the pit of the stomach by a punch like that, words that were about to come out would go right back inside.

"I heard they are both from Australia."

It seemed Park Jong-shik received new information.



The attacker had black hair, so I thought he must be a Korean or Japanese, but the message said he was Australian.

As for the one being beaten, he had blonde hair. Even from this distance, I could tell he was a westerner.

The black-haired man continued to attack.

It was not that he was dealing blows nonstop. When the other man looked like he was just about to declare surrender, the black-haired man interrupted it by dealing another crushing blow.

Like that, he struck the blonde man on the face or the stomach. He was repeating the process so the blonde man could not declare surrender.

In midst of all this, the black-haired man was not even using his sword properly. It seemed there was an extreme disparity in strength between the two.

The black-haired man threw a low kick at the blonde man and he fell.

The blonde man swung a mace at him, but he dodged it with ease. He then countered with his sword.

Blood gushed up above the arena. The blonde man's arm was cut off.

His painful, blood boiling scream echoed through the arena.

Looking at the man, the black-haired man said in loud voice as if he was trying to make sure everyone heard what he said.

“Oh, no. I am so sorry. I was not trying to cut off your arm. Your attack was so sharp that I countered it without realizing it. See? It would have been a lot better if you surrendered immediately when the duel was decided. Don't you think so?”

There was no patronization in his tone. His voice didn't sound like he was belittling either.

The look on his face looked sincere and regretful, as if it was an

unfortunate accident during the duel.

After that, he walked close to the blonde man and whispered, “This is why you should have not gone too far thinking you could fight me. You dumbass. You have been acting like a retard. Who do you think will protect you here?”

Although he was saying such things, the look on his face was full of regret and apology.

If anyone saw this from a distance, they would have assumed that he was apologizing and consoling the man.

What superb acting skill that man has.

He is probably flexing his actor muscles because of the warning by the Order.

If he is acting like this despite being aware of us, then I wonder how he would have acted if we were not here?

It is obvious.

The blonde man shook his body as he quietly muttered, “I... surrender..”

Park Jong-shik confirmed that the blonde man disappeared from the arena. He said, “What did he say at the end?”

It seemed he didn’t catch the whispers by the black-haired man from this distance.

“Isn’t it obvious? He taunted the blonde man.”

“I got it. I’ll go handle this. You wait for your matching.”

Park Jong-shik got up from the seat.

There probably is no need for me to go too.

Thinking like that, I waited at the seat. However, a message appeared.

[You were matched up with your opponent.]

[The duel will start after 30 seconds.]

The opponent I saw as soon as I moved to the arena was the black-haired Australian.

I am incredibly lucky.

“What’s your name?”

“My name? Just call me Lucas. Why?”

“Lucas. You are now a subject for a punishment because of the violence you perpetrated just now. I wanted to tell you that.”

“What?”

Lucas opened his eyes big and retorted.

“Hey, you must be saying that from only seeing what happened at the very end. That was just an accident during the duel. You guys said you won’t interfere with something that was an accident.”

At the end? I had been watching since the middle.

“Ask that guy Ivan later. We had been fighting, so I got worked up, but that was not intentional. We were on equal footings in terms of skills, so I had to fight my best. That’s how it happened.”

It seemed the blonde man’s name was Ivan.

“That victim named Ivan already lost the will to fight well before the duel finally ended. He didn’t have any strength left to fight either.”

“No! He just needed to say he surrender, but he couldn’t. I merely didn’t notice quickly that he was exhausted. You are going to punish me for that? With what evidence? Are you insane? Do you have any evidence that I did it intentionally? You need to be flexible. Without evidence, you can’t punish everyone just because you are suspicious!”

You didn’t notice, huh...

He is saying it was an action taken based on a subjective judgement.

I think it is something we hear a lot in court. Things like, I thought that was not the case.

I didn't know. It was unintentional.

As long as he denies it, it is he thinks any accusation will be nullified.

Sure, being flexible is good.

When it is hard to make a judgement, then everyone would prefer to go easy on the suspect.

When that bastard starts to make a case for himself in front of everyone, it would become difficult to prove that he is guilty.

As he said, there is no proof.

Judging from how he was running his mouth, it seemed he was confident about shutting up the victim as well.

No matter what, it is a fact that this man is a foreigner.

If people start to suspect that we punished an innocent man, the people from foreign servers might be less cooperative with the Order of Vigilance.

It would be a headache to handle the problems and noises that could result from this.

However, did you know that...

"We don't give a damn about those, you little shit."

[The match will begin.]

# Chapter 117 - The Tournament (12)

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“We don’t give a damn about those, you little shit.”

“What?”

“For each and every case, securing evidence, checking and measuring the situations prior and at the time of crimes, consequences of the punishments or the gazes of the people around us or whatever... If we are to juggle all those at the same time, then how are we supposed to beat the crap out of bastards like you? Especially inside the Tutorial?”

[The match will begin.]

The message showed up.

I took slow, heavy steps forward. Lucas, the slimy, snobby man panicked. He waved his hand around.

“Hey. Don’t overreact! It’s just a misunderstanding! This is crazy... You should investigate it clearly before handing out punishment! If you are going to go straight to it like this... Just what authority do you have?!”

Why are you looking for authorities here? Do you think I’m the police?

I was dumbfounded. I dashed toward Lucas.

As soon as the distance closed in, I swung my fist right at his face.

Surprisingly, Lucas responded to my movement.

Even though it was a split second, he managed to raise both of his arms to assume the guarding position.

As I thought, this guy knew a few things.

He is probably one of the stronger challengers.

Of course, it is not like he could stop my attack just because he knows a few things.

Ppaaaaak!

I struck him hard on the side of his face. Lucas faltered and staggered back from the impact.

I bet your skull shook.

The duel is already decided.

Lucas' head and back are twisted to the side.

His lower body was still holding out motionlessly, so he was managing to stay up, but that was all.

I kicked the inside of his thigh, and he promptly started to roll on the floor.

How disappointing.

Like that, he was lying on the floor and struggling. It took a bit of time until the man finally got a grip and screamed at me.

“Uuuuuuk... That was clearly intentional and excessive attack? What you did of all things should put you on the list for the punishment. You lunatic basta... Uuuuaaaaaak!”

Lucas started to yap away about some things. Meanwhile, I placed my foot above his ankle and pressed hard. Along with a cracking sound, his ankle bone was crushed.

As a bonus, that guy's noisy mouth started to pour out screams instead of annoying words.

Unlike how skilled he is, this guy can't take many hits, can he?

Just what's his skill level on pain resistance?

“So, what does that have to do with anything, you bastard? Did we ever ask you guys to be all buddies with us? We asked you to be polite kids who properly follow the rules. Did we ask you all to become pacifists along with us? We are here just to give hell to bastards like you. We told you so during the morning. If you feel wronged, then you should not have done evil in the first place.”

I happened to be bored because the tournament was no fun for me so far. Now, you are only making this annoying for me.

I moved the foot I used earlier to his knee and pressed hard again.

Again, along with the sound of bones being crushed, screams could be heard.

Lucas held his legs with his arms and shook his body in pain. I crouched down next to the man and sat down. I fashioned a sharp point of mana at the tip of my finger.

Lucas was not able to snap out of it due to pain. When I was bringing the finger toward his head, he shouted loudly, “Uuuuuaaaaaaak! Stop! I... I surrender. I surrender! Surrender!”

He shouted in desperate voice. Immediately, a message appeared in front of my eyes.

[You have achieved three wins in the second preliminary matches.]

[Current number of wins: 3]

[Congratulations. You have passed the second preliminary matches.]

While I was reading the message, Lucas, who was screaming in pain on the floor, disappeared from the arena.

[Would you like to move to the spectator seats?]

I had no need to be at the arena anymore, so I moved to the seats.

I returned to my seat, but Park Jong-shik was not around.

I lifted my head and looked around, and tried to look for him.

There was a spot in the spectator seats area with lots of people gathered.

They were the Australians... In particular, the thugs like bastards were gathered there.

Park Jong-shik was there with the Order of Vigilance.

Also, Lucas was a small distance from where the Australians and the Order members were having a standoff. He was struggling in pain, grasping his leg.

It seemed one of the Order members knew where Lucas was sitting.

If that was not the case, there is no way they could have swooped in so quickly there.

Anyway, I think this is going to cause a stir.

It seemed that other Australians were trying to protect their comrade. The Order members were trying to get to Lucas, but they were not allowing them to pass. They formed a barricade with their bodies.

From how it looks from the distance, I think they are arguing with the Order, questioning our authority on the matter.

I didn't bother to focus my hearing to hear details of their arguments.

It didn't matter. It was obvious what was going to happen next anyway.

The Order members warned again and again to the people who were getting in the way.

I'm sure the Order members were warning them that they won't be spilling blood if they stepped aside willingly.

The warning was ignored as if they thought that was the obviously right thing to do.

Instead of stepping aside, the Australians tried to push the Order members away.

Because of where the situation was headed, the Order members each exchanged a look. They all drew their weapons at the same time and promptly charged in.

The Australians seemed like they never expected to be attacked.



They were not able to put up any resistance before being swept away.

A carnage of blood and scream continued for a moment. The Order members cleared the wall that was blocking their path. They were able to secure Lucas.

Lucas was still screaming in pain. The Order members ended his life. As if they were trying to say that their business was done, they swiftly retreated.

The process and result were all very obvious.

In the modern day world, criminals are usually handled by imprisonment and rehabilitation.

However, due to the special characteristic of the Tutorial's environment, it was impossible to isolate the criminals from the victims and the rest.

We were in an environment without any knowledge on rehabilitating the criminals or experts for it. To stop reoccurrence of criminal activities by the criminals, the Order of Vigilance chose the following option.

They made it so that it was impossible for the criminals to ever commit crimes ever again.

Inside the Tutorial, we had waiting rooms where all wounds and abnormalities were recovered. Hence, there was only one way to stop the criminals from committing more crimes later.

When the very first day of the great harmony concluded, which was full of chaos, people thought the problems that the Representative Federation perpetrated were completely over.

However, although the members of the Federation received bucket loads of beatings throughout the day, they all survived and went back to the waiting rooms and stages.

After the day of the great harmony ended, they were quiet for a

few rounds.

However, as the time went by, the Order's surveillance started to loosen.

Back in those days, we didn't have any information about the day of the great harmony. They thought the day of the great harmony may not happen again.

Also, they were infuriated about being attacked by the people that they once oppressed and stepped on. So, the members of the Representative Federations retaliated.

Like that, they started engaging in criminal activities again.

Through a manager, the information about the second day of the great harmony being held was communicated to us. Afterwards, when people learned about this, countless messages came flying to the Order of Vigilance.

They were all messages with records of what people personally suffered or witnessed.

The seriousness and prevalence of the crimes were far beyond what the Order expected. The Order was shocked.

Also, the Order kicked themselves over the fact that the same crimes were perpetrated.

The Order acknowledged that their measures were not harsh enough. They came to a conclusion together that they must not repeat the same mistake.

When the second day of the great harmony happened, the Order immediately hunted down the leader of the Representative Federation and other criminals. Then the Order discussed the punishment.

Along with fervent support of countless victims, they came to a unanimous decision about the punishment for the criminals.

During this day, even the people who were not victims also

argued for executions of all criminals.

During that day, the green field where the day of the great harmony was held was like the execution site or witch trial site from the medieval era.

Everyone was intoxicated by the madness that day. The problems related to the Representative Federation were pulled off from the ground along with all of their roots.

Like that, the problems were resolved, although we occasionally have gotten new problems since.

This time, it was the same.

We resolved the immediate problem by executing Lucas, but new problems happened.

Until the incident, the huge arena was lively. Now, the atmosphere was frozen.

Due to a sudden commotion, people were mumbling at each other. They looked anxious.

The preliminary matches were nearing the end.

People were eating snacks with people around themselves and making new friends, establishing relationships and comradery. Such were common until a moment ago. Now, the atmosphere had sunk to a heavy mood.

Everyone's face was saturated in anxiety and fear.

It is a huge contrast to the mood earlier because it was so lively before this.

Compared to the militant attitude that the Order displayed in the beginning, the Order had been quiet until now. After seeing what transpired, Japanese and Australian people were shocked. Meanwhile, people from the Korean server just figured as much after seeing what happened.

The Korean people didn't exactly have pleasant looks on their

faces, but...

Is it because they have seen and experienced these a few times before?

I found it regretful that the atmosphere was quickly changing into this sunken mood.

It was full of festiveness before this.

Still, we could not afford to waive the execution.

It was at that moment. I was sitting at my seat, and someone came to me.

It was the bearded uncle from the Japanese server.

Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk didn't even show their noses to the scene. They said they were busy. As for Park Jong-shik, he was still on the rear side of the spectator seats.

It looks like I'll have to meet him.

"I think we will have to talk for a bit. Can you please explain what happened just now?"

I was uncomfortable that I had to step up and carry out the conversation again. Still, I stayed calm and explained the commotion that transpired a moment ago.

"Was this the punishment that you guys meant?"

I nodded. The bearded uncle asked again,

"Why did you guys have to take such an extreme measure? On top of this, your group also attacked others who were not the one that committed the crime?"

Um...

"If I must explain, it was to prioritize the protection of the victim."

As a public relation type of response, the Order of Vigilance explained the decision this way.

For the sake of victims, the criminals are punished with the most severe method.

In fact, this was the Order's primary intent.

"Still, that is too extreme."

The bearded uncle pointed at the Australian people who were still knocked out because they got beat up by the people from the Order.

"You understand why I feel anxious about this, right?"

I nodded.

After seeing the Order taking an extreme measure, even among the Korean people, there were many who looked anxious.

They are probably worried about these mad dogs aiming their fangs at someone other than the criminals and oppressing the people with their power.

"You won't need to worry. Well, it would be hard for you to believe even if told you this, but still..."

"If, by any chance... what I'm concerned about does happen, we won't just sit quietly and take it. Remember that well."

That's obvious.

I told him to do so.

The look on the man's eyes were stern like a protective statue in front of a village. The concerned look on his face refused to leave him.

"If you would like to hear a more detailed response, it would be best if you talked to someone else. I'm not in charge of that, so..."

"... I got it. In that case, I should go calm the people first, so I'll get going."

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Not long after the commotion, the second preliminary matches

were over.

I had to stay at the arena building long after the matches were over.

After I confirmed the very last person left the arena, I was finally able to leave.

I looked at the inside of the building one last time. I felt like I became a manager for the arena building.

Like that, I started to walk to the residential building.

With the arena building at the center, there were three different residential buildings. We decided to assign each server one building.

“Haaaaaaaaammmmmm. I wonder when Jung-ah is going to come.”

I asked Kim Min-hyuk who was walking right beside me.

He was able to finally show his face after the matches were over for the day.

Of course, I’m sure he was busy.

“I’m not sure. She looked super busy. I think she might need to stay up whole night and work today.”

Allocating the Order members assignments, assigning the residential building rooms, and recording the people’s movements in real time... I’m sure she is incredibly busy doing all that.

It was not like she could organize them with a computer. She had to write it all on paper.

In middle of all this, there was not enough manpower to handle the work. Just a few had to do it all by themselves. I could understand why Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk could not leave their posts easily.

“By the way, what’s up with the sword and the sheath?”

Kim Min-hyuk was pointing at the sword and the sheath on my waist.

“Are you following the trend from the Japanese people? You find it cool?”

“It’s not like that.”

Honestly, I think it is cool.

“Lately, human characters appeared on stages. I thought that it would be more useful to have a sword placed on my waist when dealing with people instead of having it inside the inventory where it is not visible.”

People naturally change their attitudes when they see the sword on the waist.

It was a convincing excuse.

“Ah, and look at this.”

I drew the sword from the sheath.

After that, I changed it to a shield form.

“Hul... What is this?”

The sheath was also the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

Apparently, even a sheath was considered a blunt weapon. I was able to form various sheaths with it.

“Ah, this is the thing. The thing that came out of the mystery box you got from the last tournament...”

I explained the type of forms that the Transmutable Thousand Arms could change into. I continued my explanation proudly.

“You got a mystery box too. Have you opened it?”

He brought out a spear and wielded it.

“Of course I have.”

The spear looked like an ordinary kind.

However,

“Here. If I inject just a little mana... Here, like this.”

Wielding the spear, he injected mana into it. Along with resonating sound, the spear tip was wrapped in mana.

No, that’s no ordinary mana.

“Aura?”

Even with a little bit of mana injected into the spear, the spear tip had a completed aura wrapped on it.

Of course, I could make that aura myself. However, to the people who could not, the spear was incredibly valuable.

Having an aura on the weapon meant more than just amplifying the weapon’s cutting power.

Looking at Kim Min-hyuk’s spear and then my Transmutable Thousand Arms, I felt left out.

Isn’t his spear better than mine?

I am sure Kiri Kiri said the Transmutable Thousand Arms is a great weapon.

The thought was coming up. Kim Min-hyuk said,

“Give it to me. I wanna try too.”

I changed a Transmutable Thousand Arms to sphere shape and handed it to him. Kim Min-hyuk closed his eyes and focused.

After a moment, he formed a weapon. It was a spear.

The problem was that... Its tip was exuding flames.

What is that?

“Wow, something like this is in it too? What should I call this? Flame spear? Isn’t this totally a cheat item? If it has a function like this, then you should have told me about this first.”

No. I didn’t know either.



Kim Min-hyuk tried changing the Transmutable Thousand Arms to different forms.

This time, again, it was another spear.

However, this time, the tip of the spear made pazizizick sound. I could tell that electricity was flowing through.

It seemed Kim Min-hyuk was having fun. He tried changing the form again.

The next form that he made was... Something that appeared to be a hand cannon.

# Chapter 118 - The Tournament (13)

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“This... really looks like a hand cannon?”

Staring at Transmutable Thousand Arms, Kim Min-hyuk said that.

“Does it have cannon shells?”

“No, I don’t have anything like that.”

This couldn’t just be a blunt weapon that was shaped like a hand cannon. It seemed like the shells needed to be purchased separately.

I had never even dreamed that Transmutable Thousand Arms could form this kind of weapon.

I had unconsciously limited the possibilities of weapons to just non-firearm weapons.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms’ description mentioned stuff about dragons and what not. So, I thought Transmutable Thousand Arms was something from a fantasy world, affirming my train of thought even more.

“I think this will be difficult to use? You don’t have any shells for it. Even if you did, I think you will have to assemble this lower portion somehow before using this. You probably will have to purchase separate parts for it. If you ask the manager later about this...”

Kim Min-hyuk observed the hand cannon from various angles as he mumbled. However, I felt someone approaching from the back.

Someone naturally grabbed onto my hand. I also grabbed the fingers that held my hand as I turned to look.

It was Park Jung-ah.

Before we headed to the residential buildings, we told her about our location through the messenger. It seems she came to greet us.

“You two came?”

“Yes.”

Although we didn't say much to each other yet, just looking at her made me smile for some reason. I asked if she had been very busy. She simply said she was alright.

I felt an awkward gaze from the side. I turned to look, and it was Kim Min-hyuk, who was left alone with the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

“You two... why don't you guys go get a room... Ugh...”

He is at it again.

Instead of consoling Kim Min-hyuk's spoiled mood, I decided to not respond to it at all.

Park Jung-ah decided to do the same.

“That must be the Transmutable Thousand Arms? Can I take a look too?”

“Uh, yes, of course.”

Park Jung-ah was of the gunner class.

She is probably better at handling these kinds of forms since she mainly deals with firearms.

She got the Transmutable Thousand Arms from Kim Min-hyuk and fiddled with it here and there.

Clank-Clank-

“So that's how it is assembled. Its frame is formed in a way that a support pops out when you pull this. Tighten this to fix the barrel and... Inject mana through this handle and pull the trigger. That will fire the weapon. It seems this weapon requires mana from the user to be usable. Judging from that, I think it must be pretty powerful? Also, this barcode like insignia is the serial number for the shell needed. I do not recognize it, but if you show this to the

manager, she will help you purchase the right kind.”

Oh, what is this? She is so cool.

Even though this was her first time seeing the weapon, she masterfully figured out how to use it. She even gave me a variety of advice. Watching her, I thought she looked so cool.

I found her extremely attractive showing her expertise in this kind of thing.

Perhaps I just have a beer goggle.

“Still, I don’t think I’ll be using this weapon a lot. It is definitely a powerful, long-range method of attack, but it is not like I am having difficulties in clearing stages right now. Moreover, I think my growth is more important. It is not like I’m developing skills related to this.”

“Is that so?”

“Depending on situations, I might use it a few times, but I probably won’t use it very often.”

“Um... How about this then?”

Park Jung-ah thought hard about this for a moment and then formed a handgun with the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

It even has a handgun form...

Actually, it even has a hand cannon, so why not.

“Um... It would be useful for self-defense, but... As I said earlier, my growth is more important, so, well... Still, I think I’ll find this handgun to be useful occasionally.”

Although I told her that, it seemed Park Jung-ah was not satisfied with my response.

She continued to deliberate about this as she formed various weapons with the Transmutable Thousand Arms, for over almost 10 minutes.

I should not have talked to her about the firearm types as if they were more or less useless.

I was careless.

I didn't think she would be so focused on finding a form that would be useful for me. I didn't think she would try this hard.

"Hey, how long are you guys going to be at it? Let's go back."

"That's right, Jung-ah. The handgun form that you showed me will definitely be helpful. That will be enough for me."

"Ah, please wait. Just a bit."

However, she didn't listen as if she was trying to tell us not to interrupt her.

Oh my, unexpectedly, she sure can be mighty stubborn.

No, this is not unexpected. I knew very well that she was stubborn.

I have seen her stubbornness many times as she managed the Order of Vigilance.

However, I didn't know she would be so persistent on something so trivial like this.

It looked like she was hell-bent on finding a useful form for me. She was still deliberating and fiddling with the Transmutable Thousand Arms. Kim Min-hyuk sighed.

I just gave up and sat on a chair that I brought out from the inventory.

I brought out chairs for Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk. However, Park Jung-ah didn't even bother sitting down. She continued her pondering.

"Now that I'm seeing you like this, I see that you have a factory assembly worker-like side."

Um...

I couldn't talk back at what Kim Min-hyuk said.

Still, I thought this was a good sign.

When I met Park Jung-ah for the first time, I thought she was a cold robot devoid of emotion.

I thought that side of her was remarkable, but I found it appalling as well.

However, recently, that side had been toned down.

Her face became more expressive as well. She now had a smoother impression.

I could see that her attitude toward dealing with people had changed a lot along with her predispositions.

Now, there were even posts on the community saying people thought Park Jung-ah became more human-like lately, along with comments noting that she was really unlike a human being before.

Certainly, she had been obsessive before because of what happened in the past and had been pushing everyone around her to be extremely vigilant along with her. Compared to those days, she has become a lot more relaxed.

She looked better, and it was also easier to be next to her.

I think the stubbornness she was demonstrating now is a part of this change.

If she was like before, she would not have bothered spending time on something like this.

She would not have insisted on this when there was someone waiting either.

She would not have made a big fuss about trying to find a form that would be useful for me either.

Also, I wondered if this was her personality before entering the Tutorial.

As I thought about that, I realized that I liked her stubbornness as well.

So, with a smile on my face, I could watch her going at it.

As I watched, it felt like watching a child putting up a serious face while playing with Legos. I thought she was adorable.

Of course, that was just my impression. As for Kim Min-hyuk, he saw the look on my face and was disgusted by it.

“I got it! How about this?”

What she proudly showed me was something that looked like a kabob skewer. It was about the length of my forearm.

“What is that? Barbeque kabob?”

Kim Min-hyuk joked around. Park Jung-ah gave him a light glare. She then handed me the kabob skewer.

“Here, near the handle, there is a part that’s slightly protruding. Inject mana there... like this.”

At that moment, the stick made pazizizic sound, and electric sparks flew off the tip of the kabab.

“What do you think?”

“I see it is some kind of electric shock instrument. I think it would be useful for self-defense. However, do you think this rascal would need this kind of self-defense weapon?”

From the side, Kim Min-hyuk gave his opinion about the form. However, I could not agree with him.

“This is the best!”

“Right? With this, you don’t need to worry about how to enhance your electric resistance skill! On top of that, by adjusting the mana, you can adjust its power.”

“This is perfect! It is what I needed the most. Thank you so much!”

“... Instead of self-defense, I never thought it would be for self-harm.”

\*

I heard busy noise from the side, so I woke up. I opened my eyes, and it was Park Jung-ah. She was sitting at the edge of the bed and fiddling with a dagger.

Our eyes met and Park Jung-ah smiled with the dagger on her hand.

You frightened me, seriously.

I didn't let her know how frightened I was. I pretended like I was fine and asked, “What are you doing instead of sleeping?”

“Please catch the rest of the sleep. I'll go to sleep after checking this out a little while longer. Ah, can you please let me borrow one of these until the tournament ends? I would like to find other forms until the tournament ends.”

It seemed she woke up in middle of the night and had been exploring other forms of the Transmutable Thousand Arms since.

“Why not. I would only be grateful. Still, don't go staying up whole night playing with that. Didn't you say you have a lot of work to do tomorrow?”

“Yes, but I'll try it out just for a while longer and then go to sleep.”

\*

It was the second day of the tournament. The individual matches' main rounds were held this day.

It was not like the second preliminary matches where the opponents were selected at random. This time, the matches were in accordance to a match-up chart.

There were only four arenas with matches at any time during the main matches. So, the matches went on for the entire day although



the number of participants had been reduced significantly through the preliminaries.

My matches were during early in the morning. I won both matches with ease. Since then, I had been just watching the other matches from a spectator seat.

My next one won't happen until the evening.

The mood at the spectator seats was relatively mediocre and light-hearted.

There was that incident yesterday, but it had been a day after all. Perhaps that's why?

Although it was just one day, it was not like any other day in the Tutorial where people were either isolated in waiting rooms or inside stages. The challengers got to spend the day with the people they wanted to spend time with. I am sure that it was meaningful for them.

The matches were mostly peaceful.

I'm sure even the duels between honorable knights during medieval times were not this peaceful.

People were wielding weapons and attacking each other. However, everyone avoided fatal areas. Also, when people noticed their opponents were hurt pretty badly, they stopped fighting and asked if the opponents were all right.

They didn't need to go that far.

"From their perspective, it is practically obvious why they are being careful."

It was as Kim Min-hyuk said.

From all the way at the spectator seats, only select few could hear what the participants were saying to each other.

Also, even those who could only do so by focusing on just one arena from all matches, and there were so many matches

happening simultaneously during the preliminaries yesterday.

So, most people were not aware of the details behind why Lucas was executed yesterday.

“Still, won’t it be fine to tell people that we were certain Lucas was intentionally torturing his opponent?”

“It does not change the fact that we have no evidence. You and a few of the members of the Order heard what that bastard said. That’s all. It would be easier to just let it be like this. There is no need for us to explain our actions every time either. Actually, we shouldn’t.”

Kim Min-hyuk explained, and I decided to just let it be. I told him I understood.

“Oh, it looks like Lee Hyung-jin’s match is about to begin.”

“Where?”

Kim Min-hyuk pointed at an arena. There really was Lee Hyung-jin there.

It looked like the match was about to begin.

His opponent was... the Australian Hell Difficulty challenger.

Wow. This is a jackpot match.

They said that black guy was at the Sixth Floor in Hell Difficulty.

Lee Hyung-jin was still at the Fourth Floor.

“I think this will be fun.”

I wonder how strong the Sixth Floor’s challenger is?

If he just got there, then he won’t be very different from when he just cleared the Fifth Floor. If he was past the midpoint, then he is probably at a step higher than someone who is at a floor below the Fifth Floor.

Also, how will Lee Hyung-jin do against a challenger who is at a higher floor than his own?

Even if he loses, if it helps him discover his weaknesses and their possible improvements, those alone are big gains.

After waiting for a moment, the match begun. Lee Hyung-jin and the black guy started to move.

It seemed Kim Min-hyuk and I were not the only ones focusing on this match. Shouting exploded from the spectator seats.

It seemed there were quite a lot of people who were waiting for this match after seeing the match-up order on the chart.

I didn't see the chart, so I didn't know about this.

“Who do you think will win?”

“How should I know?”

I haphazardly ignored his question and focused on watching the match.

However, I didn't focus on it for long.

The match went on for 10 minutes. Passing that, it got to 30 minutes and then towards one hour. Nobody from the spectator seats were paying attention to the match anymore.

“This is too much.”

“I know.”

It was too much.

Their duel was excessively cautious.

It was overwhelmingly unentertaining.

If the spectators were customers who paid, I'm sure people would have thrown water bottles at the arena by now.

Lee Hyung-jin and the black man only gazed up at each other and waited for the other side to make a mistake.

Like that, they just waited.

Occasionally, they glared at each other as if they were in a staring

contest.

After that, they just waited again.

Occasionally, from outside of effective range, one side tried out an attack that might barely or might not reach the opponent.

After that, they just waited again.

Like that, the duel lasted for almost for an hour.

I don't think it would be this bad even if Mayweather fought himself.

"If it is like this, can't we just say Lee Hyung-jin is the winner by technicality? After all, he is from a lower floor."

I am not sure. I wish that was the case too.

I couldn't be sure if I could agree with him.

"From how I see it, it is not dragging along because Lee Hyung-jin is trying to hold his ground against an opponent who is stronger than him. It is just that their styles are too similar."

Both of them were focused on speed and evasion.

Naturally, they both prefer evading attacks and throwing counters. So, neither side tried a real first attack against the other.

They just continued a battle of fighting spirit instead.

"Well... Um... Actually, it would be hard to survive in the Hell Difficulty unless the challenger has this kind of style. It could not be helped."

"You are not like this though?"

"It would be cruel to compare them to me. Now, I think this match had turned into a battle of their pride where the side who runs out of patience and attack first loses. In fact, the one who attack first is very likely to be at a great disadvantage. I don't think this will end until lunch time."

I wanted to watch the match to the very end for Lee Hyung-jin's

sake. However, I am at my limit.

I took my eyes off from the arena. I opened my inventory and brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

“What are you doing?”

“What do you think I’ll be doing?”

I formed the electric skewer with the Transmutable Thousand Arms. I brought the tip to my arm. A crackle of electricity burst into the air, and my skin got burned.

I didn’t let it bother me. I repeated poking my arm with it and releasing it from the arm.

Every time the kabab touched my skin, my arm shook lightly from the electric shock.

Blood leaked out from the wound, so I burned it by bringing the skewer’s tip to the wound area. Along with loud noise, a noxious puke-inducing smelling smoke oozed from my skin.

It formed a hardened scab from blood. I confirmed that it won’t cause more bleeding. So, I poked the same area with the kabab.

It seemed others saw me going at this. People started to stir around me. I could hear someone screaming.

What the... I’m the one in pain here. Why are you screaming instead?

“Ah, you lunatic. The foreigners are scared because of you. You had not been at this in a while. Why are you doing this again? Actually, of course you are at it. It is because Park Jung-ah showed you that form. Ugh, seriously.”

Kim Min-hyuk complained as if he had a say in the matter. It was not like he ever helped me to raise my resistance skills. I ignored the man.

Before this tournament ends, I’m really going to try earning the blitz resistance skill.

## Chapter 119 - The Tournament (14)

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I put the Transmutable Thousand Arms into the inventory and brought out a potion.

“Are you all done? Finally?”

“Yes. It is going to be my match soon.”

“... Still, you ended it before your match. I’m very proud of you for showing restraint.”

Proud of me?

I only did the sensible.

It is obvious that I should maintain a good condition before the battle.

Of course, there probably isn’t anyone in this place who could be a threat to me. Still, I need make the most minimal of preparations.

One’s mindset is important.

“By the way... Why is it so quiet around us?”

“... You couldn’t possibly be asking me because you are oblivious to it, right?”

“Aren’t I am asking because I don’t know?”

“... You had been hurting yourself with the electric shock instrument. How many bastards do you think would like to watch the matches on the arenas sitting next to someone like you?”

Ah, everyone moved their seats to avoid me.

“Despite all that, I didn’t run off, so be thankful for my presence.”

“All right. I’ll be thankful. Do you have any soda left?”

Kim Min-hyuk crumpled his face in light of my insincere

gratitude.

“Ugh... Because of you, people around us started to move. Our guys had to record all of the seat switches. Do you have any idea how much work that was for them?”

“Ah, is that so? They should have just told me about that. If it was that cumbersome, I would have just gone to a corner and done it there.”

“Was not doing it at all ever an option? Well... still, it ended up helping us, so...”

“It helped?”

“Yes. Glare at that side over there.”

I glared at the direction that Kim Min-hyuk pointed.

It was where the Australian gangs were gathered.

When I glared at them... There was a response.

I could see a few of them, whose eyes momentarily meet with mine, flinching noticeably.

“Since lunch time, their movements looked a little suspicious. Thanks to you, I think they choked up in fear. You did end up helping.”

“Um... I get that I did look odd, but was it something to be so scared about?”

“Hurting yourself?”

“Yes.”

“... Of course it looks scary. What you did was not something like cutting one's skin with a utility knife. People got to imagine the pain and shock from watching what you were doing. While they were imagining them, they saw the look on your face... You were hurting yourself, but you looked satisfied. Sometimes you seemed to be pondering deeply about something. Of course you gave them

chills down their spines.”

Is that so...

Honestly, I cannot agree that I look scary.

Is it because I accepted self-harm as just a daily routine in the life inside the Tutorial while being isolated by myself?

Perhaps it is due to my personality?

“Maybe this is the reason why. Ms. Lee Yuu-jung still seemed to be afraid of me.”

I thought we had become quite close, yet...

“Ms. Lee Yuu-jung is also a member of the Order.”

Because she is a member of the Order?[1]

That answer really bothers me.

Ever since the Order of Vigilance was established, I tried not to be at the front as much as possible.

When the second day of the great harmony happened, the Order had already had gathered enough strength of their own to hunt down and beat the crap out of the criminals.

So, I didn't bother to step in.

Kim Min-hyuk agreed with my idea because he thought that it would avoid making people feel anxious.

Also, I was stuck at the Sixth Floor during that time. So, I had no mind left to think about anything else back then.

Even after that, there wasn't any incident that required me to step in.

However, I did take on the role of keeping watch over the members of the Order.

When the members were divided, and when the Order's power was split, I stepped in and struck down the opposing side.



I demonstrated a show of my force in front of members who looked like they might cause a schism in the Order. I scared them that way.

Ah, now that I think about it, the method I chose for scaring them was hurting myself.

Anyway, the fact that people around me were afraid of me was not something to be happy about.

Although time had passed and then some, this image was preserved relatively well, so I didn't like it even more.

“Do you think that way too?”

It was the question I wanted to ask from the get-go. I tossed out the question at him.

Kim Min-hyuk didn't answer right away.

He was not able to answer right away.

I thought about this time to time.

Kim Min-hyuk was well-versed in human relations.

Of all people I could think of, I am sure he could realize that what I want is someone I could be at ease and be open, not someone who would flatter me and idolize me.

I was an existence who could be of great help to Kim Min-hyuk and also a great threat to him.

We were comfortable with each other. However, I sometimes wondered if it was not because we are close. I sometimes wondered if it was because Kim Min-hyuk formed this friendship because he needed me.

Of course, how many friendships would be not based on needs?

To me, I worried that perhaps Kim Min-hyuk was more like a skilled tamer than a brave friend.

“Rascal. We have known each other for almost a year now. I have

watched you more closely than anyone through that one year. At first, even I was surprised. Still, I got used to it as I saw you do it. Now, I'm used to it."

It is not a bad answer.

"Is that so?"

"What is it? Are you anxious about it?"

I kept quiet and just nodded meekly.

"I know you are focused on growth, but it is not like I don't care at all about other things."

"You are concerned about when you leave Tutorial, when you are back in the real world, aren't you?"

As I thought, Kim Min-hyuk is very skilled at grasping other people's thoughts.

I nodded again.

Lately, I had minds to spare, minds to spare to worry about little things.

This allowance became a gap in my fortitude.

I started to reflect on negative sides of myself. Also, I started to worry about the future that had not even happened yet.

I'm treated as a monster even inside the Tutorial. I wonder how I would be treated outside?

Also, will I really be able to adjust to the life outside?

Maybe I would be better off staying here, living inside the Tutorial?

I used to have the goals of going back to the real world, eradicating monsters and saving my family and friends. Now, even those goals are becoming fainter.

I think I'd be better off if I lived in the Tutorial forever.

I want to spend my entire life fighting, grinding, breaking and growing stronger and stronger.

Like that, I now prefer the life of repeating the cycle of growing, winning and growing again.

In fact, I was like that even before entering the Tutorial.

That was why I chose to be a professional gamer. When I could not win or grow anymore, I abandoned the profession and became a loser.

It would be nice if I could live my life like this inside the Tutorial, but the Tutorial has a limit.

The 100<sup>th</sup> Floor.

It has been over a year since I entered the Tutorial. Now, I'm almost at the 20<sup>th</sup> Floor.

Even if it takes a very long time, I'm sure I can clear the Tutorial in five more years.

No, it won't even take that long.

I am well aware of my growth rate.

Even if there is another stage that requires the party play, it won't take me long like it had taken me at the Sixth Floor when I was stuck.

In that case, just because I don't want to go outside, would I be able to keep quiet and live at the Tutorial's residential area? All by myself?

That would be also impossible.

I don't like stagnation.

In the end, I'll be leaving the Tutorial.

I slowly explained my worries.

It was difficult for me to explain this in a way that would be easy

for another person to understand. It was hard to summarize in a clear manner.

So, starting from the beginning, I just talked about each thing that came to mind.

Kim Min-hyuk heard my worries. He said he heard a similar kind of concern from a soldier in the army who thought about staying in the army forever.

I think this is a little different though.

“When I was little. Um... I guess it wasn’t when I was little. When I was a junior in highschool, of the books I read, there was a children’s book about a rabbit and a lion.”

“Usually, people don’t go reading a children’s book at that age, right?”

“... Anyway. The children’s book was a story about a rabbit and a lion who became friends. One day, they start to doubt each other. The rabbit thought that the lion must be thinking it is nothing more than just a snack and is kept alive and befriended it out on a whim. Meanwhile, the lion thought the rabbit is befriending it despite the fear for the sake of survival and in order to leech off the prestige and powerful status of the lion.”

That’s an interesting story.

“And then? How does the story end?”

“The rabbit gets eaten by the lion.”

Unlike what I thought, the story had a realistic conclusion for a children’s book.

“However, to the very end, it is never made clear if the rabbit and the lion truly thought of each other as friends. Unlike you, they never confided in each other about their inner turmoil. From how I remember, the author said the ending is open to reader interpretation. Also...”

Kim Min-hyuk took a inhaled and continued.

“You’re going through a similar crisis as the lion. You are worried that not just me, but other people and friends and family outside might be afraid of you. Also, you are worried that they might treat you superficially while hiding their anxiety inside, even if they befriend you.”

I nodded in agreement.

“Honestly, I cannot be certain about the people outside. It is not like I know your family or friends. Still, I can be certain about the people inside the Tutorial. You will be able to get closer to not just me, Jung-ah, and Big Bro Jong-shik who are already close to you, but also with other challengers. I don’t know how long it would take though.”

“Do you think so...”

“Yes. Once the rules inside the Tutorial are well established, you won’t have to step in to strike fear in people anymore. Also, you are mistaken about one thing. We are all also super humans. You are not the only one worrying about being alienated. You have seen things on the community occasionally too, right? Some people say they are worried that they might become subject of amusement or even get dragged to laboratories for experiments. We might all end up experiencing such things. When that happens, the relationship between you and the other challengers would be not like the lion and the rabbit. It would be more like between an ultra-strong lion and an ordinary lion.”

A new wall will be formed that will isolate me from the people in the real world, and that wall will be the fence that will bring those around me closer to me?

Is that what you are saying?

Hearing this wasn’t really making me feel any better.

“When everyone leaves the Tutorial as superhumans, they would

come together under the same banner. When everyone is isolated by the same wall and discriminated against, your power won't be seen as the threat of a ferocious beast. Instead, it will be a sturdy roof for them. Of course, that's if you wish to be one."

Kim Min-hyuk was giving me an imperfect solution. It was a halfway solution. However, he didn't forget to include what he would like me to do in the future.

On top of that, he did it by connecting this to the solution he proposed.

This rascal is the same as always.

"Also I... Um. I guess I don't have anything to say other than that you should just wait. I don't think I could convince you on this just with words. We will all get to realize this over a long time."

"I see. I guess so. Thanks."

\*

[The match will begin after 30 seconds.]

I had to wait far too long until the match begun.

My opponent was Asian.

The face was not familiar to me. I think he is Japanese.

He made it to the main matches, and even to the third round of the main matches. So, he is probably quite skilled.

I am not expecting much. Just be on par with Kim Kyoung-jin. That's all I'm asking for.

Um, how should I do this match?

Should I fight this one without using my arms again?

No, I tried that last time. This time, I'm going to try not using my right leg.

Usually, when my leg is injured, I supplement my mobility with Blink and Talaria's Wings, but if I don't even use my skills, then

the battle will become incredibly difficult.

I need to maintain balance with just one leg and move around. My stance will be unstable and my movements will become sluggish.

I guess that would be all right. I'll go with a handicap on my right leg.

After deciding my own handicap, I got ready for the battle.

[The match will begin.]

"I surrender!"

With that, the opponent promptly disappeared from the arena.

"What?"

[You achieved your third victory in the main matches.]

My heart beating of disappointment, I was moved to the spectator seats.

It could not be helped. Well...

Let's just wait until the next match.

\*

"I surrender."

[You achieved your fourth victory in the main matches.]

Oh my...

I think I'll have to wait until the semi-finals or the finals to have a proper match.

Kim Min-hyuk said my relationship with other challengers would be like between lions.

However, I cannot agree to that easily.

As Kim Min-hyuk said, these people were already superhumans.

Also, they will become even stronger.

These people will really become lions.

I agree on that part.

However, I am...

By the time they become lions, I don't think I'll stay a lion.

Maybe I will be something like a Tyrannosaurus Rex?



# Chapter 120 - The Tournament (15)

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[The match will begin in 180 seconds.]

My sense of boredom and disappointment didn't last for long. I felt better as soon as I entered the arena again.

As I thought, this is the best for me.

People kept on automatically surrendering, so I was able to get to the semi-final without having to swing my fist even once.

Now, I was at the semi-final. I finally met an opponent who looked like he might not surrender.

“By any chance, you are not going to just surrender, are you?”

“I wasn't intending to.”

My opponent for the semi-final was the bearded uncle from the Japanese server.

He said he won't surrender right away.

I am so thankful. Is there any way at all to let him know how grateful I am?

I don't think there is.

Unlike the previous matches, the semi-final had a longer standby time.

Also, there were no other matches happening at the same time.

In other words, in this huge building, the only match being held at the moment was just this one between me and the bearded uncle.

“I'm standing on the stage with so many people watching. I cannot disappoint them and just declare surrender right away. I have heard about you, so I already know that you are overwhelmingly powerful. Still, I'll do my best. I'll show you the pride of the Japanese!”

Pride my ass.

Anyway, I welcome your attitude for wanting to do your best.

Because the semi-final was held by itself without other simultaneously occurring matches at the same time, there were magic spells displaying the match on large screens and also the sound amplification magic for the spectators.

Even the spectators who were watching from a far distance could clearly hear what we were talking about, and they could also observe our movements in detail from the screens.

That's for sure. On a stage like this, it would be embarrassing to surrender right away.

Ah, now that I think about it, I asked him if he was not going to surrender right away. I think that might have been taken as a provocation since all of the Japanese people from the server were listening.

The bearded uncle took a few steps to come closer. He bowed.

At the heat of the moment, I bowed in response.

Was that a greeting before the duel?

This is not bad?

Like how they ask the people to do a simple greeting before the duel in a Taekwondo gym, I think it would be not a bad idea to make it a rule for everyone to do before matches.

It is a gesture that is meant to convey respect for the opponent, including basic courtesy and sportsmanship.

Although most people won't give a damn about such inside, and this would be just a formality that does not mean much, but a meaningless formality has use as a meaningless formality.

I should bring this up later.

While I was thinking about this, the bearded uncle drew the

katana from his waist.

His movements looked quite experienced.

As I thought, could he be well-versed in swordsmanship?

“Uncle, before you entered the Tutorial, did you handle swords for living?”

He could have been a swordsman, but he could also have been simply a member of the Japanese syndicate who happened to have used the katana a few times. So, I made the question vague.

“The only knives I have ever held before entering the Tutorial were kitchen knives.”

Still, his movement looked pretty skilled?

Did he learn it from other challengers?

However, the environment inside the Tutorial is not fit for learning something from another challenger over the course of a long time.

We are constantly separated from each other. We have to say farewells to each other all the time.

Also, no matter how hard I look at it, there weren't anyone in the Japanese server who were as skilled as the bearded uncle.

When I told him what I was wondering about, it seemed the bearded uncle look embarrassed.

It was only a moment ago when he looked very tough and determined.

“Um. I'll tell you honestly. I saw the movements in anime. I used to love watching anime before entering the Tutorial.”

Pardon?

“Are you saying you are mimicking the swordsmanship movements from anime? Still, your moves look pretty good?”

“I have been practicing and improving the movements, and they

gradually became more natural over time.”

Oh... I never even thought about this possibility.

He was mimicking anime characters.

Unlike how he looks like, he has a flower garden in full bloom inside his head.

“I really panicked when I first ended up inside the Tutorial. I was drunk, so I don’t remember how I entered it.”

That’s just like how it happened to me.

“I was dragged into this world. I was despaired about my situation for a long time. However, what could I do? I was already trapped in this place. So, instead of staying in despair, I made a new goal for myself. That was mimicking anime characters I had been fond of. It was going to be absolutely impossible in the real world. However, in the Tutorial, as I make progress through the floors, I really could become super humans like anime characters, right? So, I am trying to achieve my childhood dream.”

I think some people would be like him too.

Now that I’m thinking about it, I think I can understand him.

When I was a kid, I wanted to shoot the Kamehameha wave like they do in Dragonball.

Back then, I actually tried out mimicking the move’s pose by myself in a room.

Maybe I’ll really be able to do the move by the time I get past the 100<sup>th</sup> Floor and go back to the reality.

That uncle adapted to the life inside the Tutorial with those thoughts.

His motivation was a unique. Still, he focused on growth, which allowed him to get to where he was now.

It was childish and unbecoming of his age, but still, it is romantic

in a way.

On top of this, he was able to tell his story in the open, in front of so many people. That makes it even more so.

[The match will begin.]

“Are you not going to draw any weapon?”

I just nodded.

Honestly, it would be cheating if I used a weapon.

I’m a fair person.

“Well then, here I come.”

Where could you go, old man?

I suppressed my urge to swing tasteless retorts at him. Instead, I focused on the bearded uncle charging at me.

He came within close range and quickly swung his sword. He started to attack me.

Ah, now that I’m seeing him swinging the sword, I can see countless flaws.

It is certain now. He never was properly trained in swordsmanship.

It was not like I had been trained properly either, but I at least had learned the basics from Idy and the Knight from the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor.

I noticed that his swordsmanship had many gaps from where I stood.

His moves looked cool to watch. However, there were so many wasteful movements in between.

Even at a glance, he had so many gaps that could be exploited. His moves were not efficient.

In other words, they were not very practical.

They were just cool-looking movements that were haphazardly joined together.

Still, as I said earlier, they looked cool.

It must be the bearded uncle who made the katana trendy in Japanese server.

Still, despite all these problems, the bearded uncle's sword was quite powerful.

He was a superhuman after all. He could break boulders with his bare hands and jump to two or three stories high with the strengths of his legs.

His swordsmanship may be lacking, but he was swinging the sword with intensity, fierceness and confidence. I could not just dismiss them and take them lightly.

Of course, it was not like his moves were threats to me anyway.

As if he was trying to stab me with a spear, he tried to stab my left shoulder with a big movement. I dodged it.

After that, I lightly struck his chest with my fist.

The moment I made contact, I felt something breaking.

I think he broke a rib bone.

After finishing the punch, I drew a bit of distance.

I am planning to make sure the bearded uncle saves his face and pride just like what I did for Kim Gyoung-shik.

The bearded uncle was the face of the people from the Japanese server. There is no need to hurt their mentality by crushing him overwhelmingly.

He is also the only Japanese to make it to the semi-final.

Moreover, the bearded uncle had been quite cooperative with us.

To the spectators, it would appear that the bearded uncle is pressuring me on like a madman and I'm dodging them narrowly

and throwing counters. They are probably thinking I finally managed to land a counter and then drew distance.

However, I'm sure the bearded uncle realized the difference in our caliber from the exchange of attacks earlier.

As I thought, the difference in our strengths is significant.

It is not a simple matter of him being less skilled in comparison to me.

Of the four challengers who made it to the semi-finals, he is the one who is most behind.

Well, he had some luck in the matchup orders.

The bearded uncle stood there still for a moment. He kept silence.

He had his mouth open. It seemed he wanted to say something. However, perhaps he thought it would be inappropriate to say it on the stage, so he closed his mouth.

Should I wait for a bit?

A brief moment passed. Other people probably thought it was just a silent battle of fighting spirit through the gazes between two high-level warriors. The bearded uncle said, "The difference in skills is greater than I thought."

I was going to be considerate and make the duel look like a close one, yet he said it out loud.

Tsk.

The bearded uncle pressed his chest hard to check his condition. He then took a stance.

"Even if it is just once, can you show me your full strength?"

"It will be dangerous."

"I'll accept the possibility of ending up with some injuries."

Instead of going easy on him on the fight, I think it would work

better for saving his face if we ended the battle with clean and substantial moves.

“Alright. I’ll show you my full strength.”

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory and formed a long sword.

I wrapped the sword in Aura Blade and pointed it toward him.

The bearded uncle also swung his katana in a cool, large motion. He then pointed forward and took a stance.

“Nakajima Shinpae.”

What’s this uncle doing?

Did he just tell me his name?

Oh my... That was so cheesy; I’m getting goose bumps.

“Lee Ho-jae.”

However, if you are a man, then you have no choice but to respond to that childishness!

I am also childish!

His name was more complicated than I thought. It was too much of a bother for me to memorize. Also, I don’t think I’ll need to remember his name in the future. It was that kind of name. When the bearded uncle took a step, at that timing, I also swung my sword and used a skill.

[Blink]

I swung my sword precisely when the Blink was activated. The sword threw off the bearded uncle’s katana to the air.

The katana’s edge cut almost half way into the bearded uncle’s wrist. The tip of the katana made a lengthy cut across his chest.

I thought I adjusted down my strength, but I’m still clumsy at doing so.



The bearded uncle's blood dropped to the floor.

"Uncle. Are you all right?"

He just nodded and took a few steps back.

"... What's the name?"

I already told you my name earlier.

Why are you asking for the name again?

I stood there with confused look. The bearded uncle supplemented his question.

"I'm asking about the name of the technique that you just used."

... I don't make such things.

It seemed this uncle was one of those people; the people who name every technique and shout the name whenever they are used... Those kinds.

This reminds me of a female college student who I met at the First Floor waiting room.

I don't remember her name or her face. Still, she shouted strange names or spells every time she swung her sword. I remember being surprised by her behavior.

So, this uncle is one of those types.

I pondered about this for a moment.

I had no choice but to ponder on it.

Naming the movements or skills and being restricted to this format... Should I tell him how much of negative impact such things would have on real battles?

Instead, should I just play along with this childish uncle who is serious about this?

I concluded my pondering. I said,

"Blink Slash."

“It is a magnificent technique. It was a great duel. I surrender.”

The bearded uncle’s attitude was like that of a fated rival character in anime who would definitely come back for a rematch in the second season. Like that, he made his dramatic exit.

[You achieved your victory in the semi-final.]

As soon as I received the message, I was moved to the spectator seats.

As soon as I moved to the spectator seats, I was welcomed by belittling voice of Kim Min-hyuk.

“Hey, Blink Boy Lee Ho-jae.”

“Do you have a death wish?”

Aaaaaaaaak!

Now that I actually gave my attack a name, it is so embarrassing.

“Min-hyuk, do not make fun of Ho-jae. It was actually pretty cool. Blink. Slash. Kuuuuuu...”

I had no idea when he showed up too. Park Jong-shik was sitting behind us. He joined in of making fun of me. Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik faced each other and put up very serious, sincere faces.

“Park Jong-shik.”

“Kim Min-hyuk.”

“Ku... I thought I was watching a hot-blooded youth anime, Ho-jae.”

“I thought it was a scene straight out of a western movie. Puhahahaha.”

Damn it all. I think Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik are going to make fun of me with this for a long time.

It is not like I only have a few blemishes in my history. Couldn’t they just leave this one be?

“What is it? Why are you not saying anything? Try acting a bit more embarrassed, Ho-jae.”

Park Jong-shik repeated the scene and made fun of me for almost over 10 minutes. However, I didn't react to it, and it seemed Park Jong-shik was disappointed. He complained.

Meanwhile, there was a match going on at the arena. It was between two other challengers who made it to the semi-final.

It was between Lee Jun-suk from Korean server and the black man who was the Hell Difficulty challenger from the Australian server.

During his battle against Lee Hyung-jin, the black man dragged on the battle for over one hour. In the end of this drawn out battle, the black man achieved victory.

After that, he achieved victory after victory. He made it to the semi-final without any trouble.

The match was a battle between the Hell Difficulty's Sixth Floor challenger and a rising star of the Hard Difficulty. It was a matchup that awaited with great expectations. However, the battle was one sided.

Lee Jun-suk was just toying with the opponent.

“If he can do that much, doesn't that mean Lee Jun-suk is stronger than Big Bro Jong-shik?”

Kim Min-hyuk asked, and Park Jong-shik flinched in fury.

“No way! He's 10 years too early to beat me!”

Even I think Lee Jun-suk is at least on par with Park Jong-shik.

During the day of the great harmony, I gave Lee Jun-suk a gift; it was an item which supplemented his mana circuit skill.

Back then, he was not this strong.

He grew incredibly fast.

Lee Jun-suk had spread a wide blitz field around him.

However, this alone was enough to keep the black man from approaching near him.

When he charged in while braving the danger of blitz attacks, Lee Jun-suk drew distance again and launched electric harpoons to tie up the black man's legs. Lee Jun-suk tried to continuously inflict damage on his opponent.

The black man could not afford to stay outside of his own attack range either. Although he could not attack, the black man was defenseless against Lee Jun-suk's ranged skills.

In the end, the black man couldn't do anything. He was like a mouse being chased by a cat. He was just desperately running around the arena.

“Ho-jae... About that rascal...”

It was unusual for Park Jong-shik to say this.

“Were you going to ask me to step on him?”

“Yep.”

Lee Jun-suk was an important challenger to Park Jong-shik, especially among the Hard Difficulty challengers.

It could even be said that Lee Jun-suk was a direct successor to Park Jong-shik.

Park Jong-shik was asking me to step on Lee Jun-suk, but he was not saying I should squash the man's potential.

Park Jong-shik was merely saying that I should have Lee Jun-suk experience the taste of overwhelming defeat. It was for the sake of Lee Jun-suk's growth and to keep his confidence in check.

I think this is necessary.

I can see clearly that Lee Jun-suk being drunk in his own power and running wild.

Such overconfidence will lead to death.

I need to apply brakes on him for his own sake.

“Will his mental fortitude be able to withstand that?”

“It will be all right. He is not the kind who would dig himself a hole on the ground forever because he was smashed and shattered once. He has some grit.”

That sounds good.

As long as Park Jong-shik keeps Lee Jun-suk under his wings, our pal Lee Jun-suk will continue to reach higher places.

Park Jong-shik glanced at Kim Min-hyuk.

“Well, if Big Bro Jong-shik wants this, then I have no objections. To start with, Big Bro is in charge of this matter anyway. It is not something I should interfere.”

Park Jong-shik looked at me next.

“It would be alright if I was a bit hard on him, right?”

“It would be good if you obliterated him once.”

This is really great.

Really, really really great.

Of all challengers here, I’ll be fighting against one who is counted as one of the best.

He is saying I don’t need to adjust down my strength, and that I can be tough on him.

I was satisfied with the conditions. I was smiling before I realized.

It was at that moment that Lee Jun-suk had firmed his tide of victory. He was looking around the spectator seats. I was not sure if it was pure coincidence or if he knew where we were. Lee Jun-suk’s and my eyes met.

There was confident smile hanging on Lee Jun-suk's face. Looking at the man's smile, I was satisfied and swelling with anticipation for the coming battle.

Today, I think I'll be relieving some of my stress.

# Chapter 121 - The Tournament (16)

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[The finals for the individual matches will begin soon.]

“It looks like it is finally going to start.”

I nodded to Kim Min-hyuk’s words. I got up and stretched my body.

Unlike the main matches and semi-final matches, which took place through the evening, the final match took place after the suppertime.

Because of this, it was hard for me to wait.

I wanted to go get in the action right away, but it was to be held after the dinner time.

[Would you like to move to the arena?]

“I’ll be back.”

I was about to get on the stage, but Kim Min-hyuk grabbed me from the back. He whispered, “Hey, I know what Big Bro Jong-shik said earlier, but you need keep it under reasonable extent. You must not destroy him too brutally.”

“I got it.”

Depending on how he does.

“Teleport.”

[Please wait.]

Is it going to start when Lee Jun-suk also enters the arena?

As soon as I moved to the arena, even at a glance, I could see everyone’s excitement and anticipation for the match.

Almost all seats were completely full.

Actually, during the tournaments through yesterday and today, people were more focused on walking around to meet people or

have conversations than watching the matches.

It was obvious. After all, they had been trapped in confining spaces for dozens of days.

However, it seemed they all saw the message about the final match being held. Even the people who were playing outside the building came inside to see the match.

Thanks to all these people, I think the Order will be having an incredibly hard time since they love to check people's movements.

I can understand why Park Jung-ah couldn't even show the tip of her nose outside throughout yesterday and today when the tournament was being held.

However, if that's the case, why is Kim Min-hyuk sitting around there?

If he has nothing to do, he should go help Jung-ah a little.

[The match will begin in 180 seconds.]

Lee Jun-suk appeared on the arena.

He appears to be full of confidence.

Actually, I can see why he would be.

His blitz skills' performances were overwhelming in destructive power and speed. Against them, long-range fighters were not able to put up much fight.

Also, close range fighters were not even able to get close to him because they were blocked by his blitz field.

He could achieve flawless victories yawning if he just used the right skills at the right times.

He got up all the way here with such easy victories. I can see why he thinks he stands a chance against me.

"We meet at last."

"I see."



“I wanted to meet you at the final match, but if I knew I had to wait this long, I think it would had been better if we ran into each other during the preliminaries instead.”

His attitude is completely different from how it was when I met him last time during the day of the great harmony.

He is like a different person.

“Why? Were you bored?”

“Yes.”

Lee Jun-suk relaxed his shoulder in an exaggerated motion and said, “Honestly, it was not just a little disappointing. My body itched because I was forced to move my body to deal with small fry. It was no different from torture. Wasn’t it like that for you too, Big Bro?”

It’s a little different for me.

My body doesn’t even itch from doing that.

“I’m not sure.”

“Looks like I’ll finally be able to demonstrate my real skills. Do you have any idea how much I had been waiting for this since yesterday? Ugh. I wish the people could just be rated based on their abilities by the system and the system could automatically disqualify anyone who are weak. It was just a waste of time.”

It looks like you still have a very long way to go.

From him rambling about ranking people based on abilities, I could tell that he is still lacking in experience.

We are in a world where the opponents are wielding weapons and skills are used without any prior indications.

A step or two difference in abilities are meaningless in this place.

In this world, it does not matter who. As long as a blade is pierced through the neck, anyone could die just the same.

Could it be that he is thinking this place is like a game?

The main people of the Korean server, the Order of Vigilance included, were following the mood in the community and intentionally treating the world inside the Tutorial like being inside a video game.

NPC, player, class, profession, rooting, farming... They borrowed terms from video games and encouraged such impressions.

They just wanted to help the newbies adjust to the environment more easily.

However, if a ranker like Lee Jun-suk is living in the Tutorial believing it is a video game, then that was a problem.

At the rate of growth that he has, I'm sure he has never had any serious danger since the early days.

It is not like I cannot understand that.

[The match will begin in 30 seconds.]

Lee Jun-suk continued to loudly babble on.

He bashed the opponents he met so far, saying that they were pathetically weak. He complained that the tournament was boring. Indirectly, he was boasting just how strong he was in comparison.

As I thought and as Park Jong-shik said, Lee Jun-suk was drunk on his own power.

I think it would be best to make him shut up.

What he was saying was being broadcasted to the entire audience in the arena building.

It seemed he was not even thinking about this. Perhaps he just didn't care if others who were weaker than him heard it. Anyway...

I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory and formed a longsword.

That alone made Lee Jun-suk stop talking.

I think it would be definitely a good idea to crush him here once.

He is not just drunk on his own growth and power.

He is giving too much weight and value to strength.

He is thinking that those who are strong should be obviously respected and those who are weak should be patronized and trivialized.

He is asserting his views onto the people.

It was not my job to correct his way of thinking.

That was Park Jong-shik's job.

My job was, before Park Jong-shik lulls the man after this, firmly stepping on him once.

“Big Bro Jong-shik said this.”

Slowly, I spoke.

I was speaking slowly, but clearly.

When I was a professional gamer, I remember going up against new players who were on the stage for the first time.

I relaxed my right hand that was holding the long sword.

I completely relaxed my arm.

With the tip of the fingers, I grabbed the handle of the sword and swung it forward and backwards.

I swung it like a bag of groceries.

The new players were usually the same when it came to their conditions during their stage debut.

Extreme excitement and nervousness.

Once they stepped on the stage, all the practice and advice from the coaching staffs went down the drain.

They moved like stupid robots following the scenarios that they became accustomed to.

They never came prepared with a gamble.

It was a debut stage. No player ever brought a move that bet it all on luck. No coach advised people to do that either.

So, it was so simple to fight newbies like that.

First, draw the opponent's attention.

“Of all Hard Difficulty challengers, you are...”

I picked a line that would make Lee Jun-suk react to.

It seemed like Lee Jun-suk found satisfaction in constantly comparing himself to others and putting himself above others.

In that case, Korean server's Hard Difficulty, the place that he belongs and where all of his competitors are, would be the one that would matter the most to him.

A newbie player whose vision had narrowed due to excitement and nervousness falls for an unexpected attempt at drawing attention.

They are taught not to fall for this, but they don't remember. What they do know regarding this won't come to their minds either.

They just focus on that trivial attempt at drawing their attention.

[The match will begin.]

If I succeeded in drawing his attention, then...

Cheese rush.

After I said “you are,” at an odd timing, the message appeared to signal the start of the match.

It is obvious.

I had been counting the remaining time mentally as I said those

words.

Lee Jun-suk is so focused on what I'm going to say next. His response is slow.

The longsword was swinging from my fingers like a swing set. The sword was tossed toward Lee Jun-suk's face in a fluid motion.

It was flying through the air like how a longsword should.

The swinging motion of the long sword, the line I recited just before and up to the start of the match, and the match time counting were all executed perfectly.

It was a small accomplishment, but I felt pretty good about this. It was like brewing tea perfectly by timing it to perfection.

It was a surprise attack, but the longsword was flying toward him slowly. There was no way that Lee Jun-suk would not be able to stop it.

He was a breath too slow. No, he was half a breath slower, but he will stop it.

So, what I should do next is charging forward.

I charged in like an arrow that was just launched from the bow and grabbed the handle of the longsword midair.

Lee Jun-suk just brought out a spear from the inventory to block the long sword. I swung my sword at him.

Kang!

Our weapons clashed.

Although I didn't put much strength into the strike, his spear was pushed way down.

As this case demonstrated, one's stance is important.

With his spear lowered, Lee Jun-suk's face was defenselessly exposed. I headbutted him.

This is the end.

It was the end when the cheese rush succeeded.

Newbie players never expect that the opponent would use extreme tactics from the start.

Although they obviously could use such, the newbie players are convinced that their opponents would never use them.

It is the power of the prejudiced thinking.

They probably won't, right? A veteran at the top won't go for an all-in tactic at the start of the game against some newbie, right? The newbies think like this.

Lee Jun-suk is thinking the same.

He was thinking that I would never do this.

Would I suddenly drop the conversation and throw a surprise attack as soon as the start message comes up?

Newbies who are stabbed in their weak point like this try hard afterwards to put out the fire.

After that, with the game's lead handed to the opponents, they are dragged around by the collar and lose.

After the headbutt, Lee Jun-suk's head rapidly bobbed backwards.

This rascal is closing his eyes.

He is focused on long-range attacks. Is he lacking in close-range experience because of this?

I placed my hand at his chest. I put weight on my hand and pushed him to the back of the arena.

Lee Jun-suk took a step back and held on so he won't fall. However, he just ended up moving to the perfect position for me to attack.

He was still defenseless. I kicked his knee.

I didn't hear any bone-cracking noise, but I am sure that I

dislocated his knee.

Lee Jun-suk fell down, but it seemed he still used a skill. A lightning sphere was formed midair.

Lee Jun-suk didn't even recover his sight yet. There is no way I would get hit.

I dodged his blind attacks and positioned myself behind Lee Jun-suk.

He was still defenseless. I struck his back with the handle of the long sword.

Enduring the pain, he reactively turned around and tried to use the same skill again.

Of course, I could watch him do all that slowly. When he turned around, at the right timing, I kicked him right in the pit of the stomach.

He rolled and rolled towards the edge of the arena.

I think that should do it.

“Jun-suk.”

“Kuhek. Kek.”

He sounded like a typical individual who just got struck at the pit of the stomach.

“You lost, right?”

“Kek. Uuhek.”

He was still almost but not quite throwing up, so there was no response.

It meant he didn't receive enough of a beating.

I should give him a stronger beating and then ask again.

\*

Lee Jun-suk diligently resisted.

Unlike the beginning, where I just shook him while grabbing him by the collar, I gave him chances to counter attack. This was why he could.

However, his range attacks were blocked by the Talaria's Wings. As for the blitz field which usually prevented the opponent from approaching, I ignored it and charged in. Lee Jun-suk didn't have any way of fighting me.

Despite this, Lee Jun-suk tried all sorts of methods to turn the tide of the match. However, in the end, they were all for naught.

“... I lost. I surrender.”

In the end, he lay on the ground with all of his arms and legs fully stretched out and declared surrender.

[Congratulations. You won the individual part of the tournament.]

[As the reward, you acquired 7800 points.]

[God of Adventure is overjoyed.]

[God of Slowness is watching you.]

[God of Duel is intrigued to watch you.]

[God of Death is disappointed.]

[God of Goodwill is feeling bad about someone.]

[You acquired a mysterious medicine. Please check your inventory.]

The congratulatory message was brief. However, my view was filled with messages about the gods' responses.

Unlike when I won the tournament last time, the God of Duel, God of Death and God of Goodwill were all present.

Who is God of Goodwill feeling bad about this time?

I wonder why that god is always feeling bad about someone?



I checked all of the messages and looked at Lee Jun-suk.

Unlike the usual, the loser was not sent to the spectator seats. Instead, he remained at the arena.

It's probably because the loser is also getting rewards for being the runner-up.

"Jun-suk, you still have a long way to go, right?"

"... Yes."

His voice was lacking sincerity.

Still, the attitude is not bad considering that it's his first beating in a while.

At the very end, I gave him opportunities to put up proper resistance using all of his strength. Despite that, he lost. Is that why his tone of voice sounds despondent?

"Jun-suk, if this was a real battle, then you would have died when you got headbutted in the beginning. Also, that was something that anyone could have done. I didn't even use any skill. I didn't use much more strength in particular either. I could have done that much even when I just cleared the First Floor. Actually, the end result would have been similar if you fought the version of me from that time."

Ah, of course, the version of me from that time would not have beaten the crap out of someone without an ounce of hesitation like this. Anyway...

I lowered my back and used my sleeve to wipe off the blood from his face. I continued.

"The battle is not decided by the power of skills alone, especially against opponents like you who completely let go of their minds and are completely careless. You see that, right?"

Lee Jun-suk nodded as if he just chewed on something unpleasant.

The sides of his cheeks were swelled up, so he actually did look like he was chewing on something.

“Jun-suk, you still have a long way to go. Try harder and be more careful. You can’t afford to die so easily and pointlessly, right?”

“Okay...”

I think that should do it.

Park Jong-shik will console him and talk to him about the rest.

I thought I lulled him pretty well. I looked at the spectator seats.

I am not expecting praises, but I think they will tell me that I did pretty well.

However, the look on Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik’s faces were not very good.

\*

It seemed our visitor was feeling a little anxious about the situation. The visitor was shaking a little. To calm the visitor, I asked Lee Yuu-jung to get us some tea.

Lee Yuu-jung was sitting next to me. She brought out the utensils for the tea and started to boil water.

I was thinking perhaps we should bring out some snacks and fruits as well, but a message came.

“Please wait for a bit.”

I asked for understanding from the visitor and then checked the message.

It was from Kim Min-hyuk.

He was asking how the conversation went with the person who came to report crimes.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Yes, we are going to start talking about it now. There aren’t any problems at the arena, right?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Nothing big. Your boyfriend is beating Lee Jun-suk to pulp, and that is a problem, but...]

There was a pretty serious problem.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Can you stop them?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: How are we supposed to stop someone who is on the arena? Also, it seems he must be thinking that he is going easy on Lee Jun-suk's discipline. It is just that, that Ho-jae rascal's standard is too tough, so...]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Just how bad is it?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: The spectators left the seats, saying they could not bear to watch it anymore. That bad.]

It was a serious problem.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Were there any movements from anyone? Complaints from the Japanese people perhaps?]

If the people from the Japanese server saw this and judged that it was excessively cruel, then it would become a serious problem.

It is an act that the Order of Vigilance forbid, yet the Order committed the act.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Fortunately, there hasn't been any. That lunatic... Ho-jae bastard is beating the crap out of the kid, but instead, they were saying advisory stuff like focus, watch the steps, skill distribution order is wrong, and the movement is too big. So, instead of thinking that he was attacking with malicious intent, they think he is just insane. Lee Jun-suk is not surrendering and foolishly hanging on too. It would be easier if he just surrendered quickly, but that guy's head is not right either.]

It worked out well. It was not a big problem.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Ah, also, Lee Hyung-jin said he wants

to help you guys.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Lee Hyung-jin, one of the Hell Difficulty challengers? Why all of the sudden? I remember him being not all that interested in the Order's business?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Ho-jae won't be participating in the group round. So, it looks like he was going to give lessons to Lee Hyung-jin whenever he finds the time. I think Lee Hyung-jin is scared of this and trying to make a run to your side.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: I see. Please tell him no.]

# Chapter 122 - The Tournament (17)

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[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Yes. Please tell him no.]

I sent him the reply and closed the messenger.

After that, I looked at the guest. He was still looking anxious.

His gaze ran met mine. He flinched.

I'm used to this kind of response, but it still hurts to see this.

Even before I entered the Tutorial, I've heard from people that my eyes look a little fierce. However, it was not this bad back then.

It is not like I shoot some kind of laser beam from my eyes. Why are they so surprised?

Does deadly aura get piled up every time I kill people?

Only until recently, I didn't care if people were scared of me or if they cursed about me behind my back.

I actually liked that, thinking that such an impression of me would help me.

However, lately...

They were useless thoughts.

I should just focus on what's happening in front of me.

"I'm sorry. I had to send a message real quick. Well then, may I hear the rest?"

"Yes, yes."

The visitor was a Korean.

He was no ordinary Korean.

He was summoned to the tournament as a part of the Australian server.

His name was Jung Chan.

29 years old. He introduced himself as a student who went to Australia for his studies.

However, when I asked further, he said he also obtained the Australian citizenship.

I could not figure out if he was summoned as a part of the Australian server because of the citizenship or if because he was simply residing at the country.

I will have to inquire the manager after the tournament ends to learn about this.

Also, Jung Chan provided us with an interesting information.

It was information about the gangs that were dominating the Australian server.

“So, that is... Where was I... So...”

The man stuttered.

“You said that the atmosphere in the Australian server was different during the last tournament. That’s how far you were.”

According to him, the uneasy atmosphere in the Australian server was growing during the first tournament.

It had not been long.

Other than that particular gang group, there are many other groups. Also, even that gang is internally divided into several groups. There is no large faction that encompasses the entire server. I don’t find that surprising considering that the first tournament only happened a while ago.

“I think the first problem happened during the second day of the tournament.”

They had the group matches during the second day of the first tournament.

“When it begun, it was some of the challengers from the Hard

Difficulty who sparked the issue. They attacked other challengers they met at the tournament. The attacks were one-sided and carried out as a group.”

It was plausible.

The people in Hard Difficulties who spent rounds after rounds at the lower floors would have had an easier time organizing themselves than people from other difficulties.

“They blocked people’s mouth in middle of the matches. They kept attacking to interfere with others when they tried to surrender. Like that, they struck down the other challengers. During the second day, even after the tournament was over, they continued their violence and attacked many challengers.”

Like that, with their power and through violence, they spread terror and committed acts of viciousness.

Also, as soon as the third day came, people all returned to waiting rooms to take shelter from the gang’s violence.

Meanwhile, at the place of the tournament, only the perpetrators remained to stay for another day.

We don’t know what they discussed there.

After that, time passed like that, and the second tournament was held.

He said that the Australian people greatly feared that the gangs will perpetrate acts of violence again, especially because this tournament was going to last longer than the past tournament.

Also, he said that some of the gangs left taunting notes on the community, saying that other challengers should look forward to the tournament.

However, when the tournament started, they ran into the Order of Vigilance. Instead of fighting the Order, the gang choose to hold their breath and stay quiet.

Jung Chan stuttered his way through the conversation. After he finished telling his story, I sent him back. Before I realized, it was already evening.

The story had so much unnecessary details, so more time had passed than I realized.

The details were mostly about the violence committed by the gang and the suffering of the victims.

The details spoiled my mood.

“Ugh.”

My insides were a ruckus.

I memorized the details of appearances of the gang’s main figures.

I was thinking about their faces, but also other faces were being superimposed on them.

Also, I saw another face superimposed on Jung Chan’s face.

My hand was shaking a little. I brought out the sphere shaped Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory.

I placed it on top of my hand and let it roll in the palm of my hands. I felt like my insides were feeling a little better.

I changed its form into a ring shape.

It was no ordinary ring. It had a needle spike the length of a forearm attached to its front.

It was a kind of a weapon. After all, this was Transmutable Thousand Arms.

Still, it is a ring.

I put the ring on my finger. I closed my eyes for a moment and calmed my breathing.

“Are you alright?”



Lee Yuu-jung brought me tea and asked.

“Yes, I’m all right. Thank you for the tea, Big Sis.”

I put up a peaceful face and responded to her.

However, she grabbed my hand and looked at me with moist eyes, like how she always was.

I wonder how long this trauma will follow me around.

It’s been a year, which is a long time. I think it is about time for it to disappear, yet...

I lifted the tea cup and took a sip from it.

The tea cup shook a lot because of the ring I had on my finger.

The ring is too heavy.

I put down the tea cup and opened the message window.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: I finished my conversation with him.]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Please start with a brief summary.]

As he requested, I started with an explanation.

I suppressed my emotions as much as possible. I tried to describe it as objectively as possible.

I am not sure if I did well.

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: I vote that we wait.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: I second that. However, what if they do not show themselves until the tournament ends?]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: If that happens, then we should go and hunt them down.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: I also second that. Please ask other captains about their opinions.]

[Tournament, Day 3, 11:30]

“Ugh. Huk. Huk.”

Lee Hyung-jin was gasping for air while sitting at a spectator seat. I clicked my tongue at him.

You totally lack endurance.

“Is it hard?”

“Ugh... Phuuuu... No.”

Oh, is that so?

“It is not hard. I think I’m going to die, Big Bro.”

Oh, is that so?

“Can you describe your current condition in detail?”

“Ugh... That is... I just... can’t breathe very well. I feel like my vision is spinning. I feel dizzy. The color of the ceiling is shifting. Uuuuaaaa. I feel like there is a mosquito that’s circling around at the tip of my nose. My ears. I cannot hear anything through my ears sometimes. I hear the high pitch noise sometimes too. My inside hurts as well. Big Bro. I feel like I’m experiencing motion sickness, and then it feels like I’m being pressed down all of the sudden. Also, I cannot feel very well through the tips of my fingers. I think it is just cold too... Also... From the back of my neck...”

Outside the arena building, he finished a special training that went on only for three hours. However, Lee Hyung-jin was already completely exhausted.

It could not be helped, so I carried him on my shoulders and brought him into the arena building.

Lee Hyung-jin finally regained his consciousness after 10 minutes of lying on the seats.

He needs to develop faint resistance.

“You only trained for three hours, and look at you. You are already exhausted. I see you had not been training when you were by yourself usually.”

“I... I did train! Big Bro, and how could you call that training!”

It seemed he felt wronged. He shouted in a loud voice. He closed his eyes again and gasped for air. His breathing was rough.

When one is trying to catch breath, it is not a good idea to talk so much like that.

That will make the head spin due to a lack of oxygen.

“Anyway, I really think you lack persistence. You only know to treat your body carefully. Um... How should I say this. Ah, right. You are too weak against pain. You need to be able to endure difficulties. Only then, you will be able to accomplish anything.”

“Pardon?”

“I think you will need to raise pain, paralysis and faint resistances first. From now on, continue to buy poison potions and diligently train with them. Ah, first, I’ll help you until the tournament ends. I have a skill called Poison Energy, you see? If I use this, then you won’t need to waste points buying poison potions.”

“B... Big Bro... Please let me live.”

“It’s all right. You won’t die. No, actually, you could die if you were exposed to Poison Energy skill for a long time, but I can adjust it so you won’t die. I’m an expert at this, you know? Just trust your Big Bro.”

Lee Hyung-jin’s face was full of sweat. Now, new drops started to form on his face. They were flowing down his face like a waterfall.

You, are you crying now? Crying?

I could not stand to watch this. I turned my face away from him.

Still, I had no intention of allowing him to skip the special

training.

“Would you stop torturing the kid? Although I’m just watching, even I can feel the pain.”

I want to say I will stop this.

However, one day, Lee Hyung-jin will be challenging the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor. Thinking about this, I want to give him a harder training and grinding.

Also, Lee Hyung-jin was quite motivated.

He was complaining that he was so exhausted and on the verge of death. However, he saw the training to its end. As we saw at the individual tournament’s preliminary matches, he tried all sorts of things to focus on his growth.

However, it was just that his body was not able to catch up to the harshness of the training I gave him.

Still, the training I made for him is going to become his blood and flesh. No matter how much he suffers during the training, I have no choice but to make him go through it even if it is going to bring tears to my eyes.

Well, it is not like I’m a pervert who enjoy making another person suffer. Would I force someone into grinding when he doesn’t want to?

“By the way, aren’t you going to go do your work?”

I changed the topic from about Lee Hyung-jin.

This was a question that has been in my mind since yesterday.

Jung-ah never showed herself throughout the day, saying she was busy. However, this rascal was sucking honey while sitting around at the spectator seat.

“I’m working. Through the messenger.”

“Really?”

“Really.”

I really think this rascal is just goofing off and loafing around.

However, I have no way to confirm my suspicion.

I moved my gaze away from Kim Min-hyuk for a moment and looked down below into the arena.

The first place my gaze headed was the match where the Korean server's Hell Difficulty challengers formed a party and entered.

Initially, Lee Hyung-jin was included in that party. However, he left the party momentarily for the special training.

With Lee Hyung-jin out, I thought the rest of the Hell Difficulty challengers would give up on the match, but it seemed they decided to try anyway.

They were not able to do so well.

After all, they were all from the First Floor.

Also, there weren't many of them.

There were fewer of us Hell Difficulty challengers in the Korean server now.

Now, there were just six of us, including myself and Lee Hyung-jin.

I know I have to do something for them too.

Kim Min-hyuk said that perhaps I shouldn't give them advice so soon.

He was concerned about people challenging traps with misplaced courage blown into them by encouragement, and that could only lead to more deaths instead.

Although it may look like he was being irresponsible, he was not wrong.

How am I going to get them to pass through the First Floor?

I feel so frustrated.

Other matches had consisted of Hard Difficulty challengers from the Korean server who formed their own groups.

Most of the people from the Hard Difficulty formed parties with people they like and entered the group matches.

Also, they were all overwhelming the opposing sides.

The difference is significant.

There was the difference in heights between Korean and foreign servers, but even within the Korean server, the power of the groups from the Hard Difficulty was overwhelming.

They were from the higher difficulty, so it could be said that this was an obvious outcome. However, even with that under the consideration, the gap was too big.

Since the early days of the Tutorial, the Hard Difficulty challengers had a exclusive club-like atmosphere amongst themselves. I think this had a big influence.

The challengers of the Hard Difficulty have been training and clearing stages together since the lower floors. So, their mastery level in party battle itself is different.

They show great synergy too.

However, it was not like the formation of such an atmosphere among the challengers never posed problems.

Because the Hard Difficulty challengers were sticking with one another too much, they had a tendency to alienate and patronize challengers from other difficulties.

In fact, something similar to the ideology of being superior, chosen people had rose among them, and we went through a tough time because of this.

It would had developed into a huge problem if it was not for the fact that Park Jong-shik was the leader of these people from the

Hard Difficulty and the fact that I was standing above them.

In the world inside the Tutorial, the standard of anyone's worth was based on strength. Considering this, it is difficult to retort against their ideology.

In fact, all of the challengers in the leadership roles in Japanese or Australian servers are from Hard Difficulties.

The Korean server is the only one with high participation rate from Easy and Normal difficulties.

It's all because of the Order of the Vigilance.

Well, anyway, from the looks of things in the tournament's group matches, I think Korean server's victory is a certainty.

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[Tournament, Day 3, 11:10]

"Ahah. I am no good at these."

"No, you can do it, Gyoung-jin. I, your Big Sis, believe in you."

"Believe in? Do dogs have horns?"

I'm serious.

I hate stepping up and facing people like this.

I tried to voice my dissent. However, all I got in return was belittling laughter.

"Kim Gyoung-jin, you are the biggest attention addict in the community. What did you just say that you hate?"

The group was snickering around. I sent them a 'fuck you' to them all. I went to the friend who was standing on the far back.

"Anyway, I didn't know you would come too, Jun-suk. What happened?"

"I was also... got beat up a lot yesterday. Should I say it is for revenge?"

“Oh, that makes some sense. It sure does.”

For some reason, the group was finding this amusing as well. Having heard Lee Jun-suk's answer, they started to snicker and laugh again.

What a bunch of crazy bastards. Have you guys been drinking?

“Now that I think about it, other than Jun-suk and direct subordinates of Jong-shik, everyone is here?”

I know. They are all here.

Big Bro Jong-shik's direct subordinates, in other words the Order's Strike Division, are not here. All of the other Hard Difficulty's rankers are here.

Every single one of them.

Ah, this feels strange.

“Hey, hey. Let's get going. The patrol will be here soon.”

The Order's patrol will come by here soon.

I told the group that we should get going now to avoid the patrol.

The group again found it entertaining. They said it was exciting and nervous. They snickered around.

Ugh, you crazy bastards.

Leading the group, I walked through the narrow street.

Before long, we were able to arrive at the building that we had an appointment at.

It was a rough looking wooden door. I beat on it.

“Say the password.”

Password? What the hell is he yapping around for.

I forced the locked door open and entered.

As soon as I opened the door, a dagger came up on my face. However, I leisurely twisted the wrist of the hand that held the



dagger. I neutralized the opponent and entered the building.

Inside the building, there was a small hall with just a table.

There was the uncle from the Japanese server named Nakajima whatnot.

It seemed he was displeased with something. His arms were crossed and his mouth was firmly closed quietly.

Also, this other guy from the Australian server is... who was he?

“Welcome. If you entered more politely, then we would have given you a warmer welcome. You said your name is Kim, right? Mr. Kim.”

I thought about if I should tell him to call me Kim Gyoung-jin, but I decided to let him just call me Kim.

“That... what is it.”

“David.”

Lee Jun-suk, who was standing next to me, whispered the name quietly in my ear.

“David, as promised, we got here without being tailed.”

“I see. Thank you for keeping the promise. Have a seat here.”

Ugh, man. I really hate this.

I glanced at my group, but they were all pushing me to go take the seat.

In the end, I am taking the role of both the head and the mouth.

I sat at the seat and said to David,

“I’ll get straight to the point.”

“Oh, wait. Please wait for a little longer. We still have one more guest who has not arrived yet.”

“You have another one coming? I didn’t hear about this?”

“He just joined recently. I am not saying you guys will not be

enough, but we should make sure of our preparations.”

Having heard the man, I decided to sit quietly and wait.

The Japanese man, who was sitting on the opposite end, was also quiet as well. So, David also quietly closed his mouth, and like that, an uncomfortable silence lasted for a while.

Several minutes passed and another person entered the building.

He was most unexpected.

“Big Bro Chan-yong?”

He was known to be nearing his goal of clearing the entire Tutorial. He was the challenger who was at the highest floor.

It was Lee Chan-yong.

# Chapter 123 - The Tournament (18)

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[Tournament, Day 5, 05:05]

“This is a little unexpected.”

“What is?”

The group rounds were over. Now, the event for the fifth day started.

We gathered together for breakfast and meeting. At the place, I looked at the list of people who would be participating in the faction matches. I could not help but to be surprised by the list.

“About the reward for the faction matches; the reward is given to every member of the faction that achieves the most number of wins, right? So, I thought a lot of the people from Japanese and Australian servers would want to join the Korean server for the faction matches. Also, I thought the tournament would conclude without too many problems because of that.”

Korean forces won the group rounds yesterday as well.

It was Park Jong-shik’s party that won the group rounds.

Also, the runner-up group and the others who made it to some of the lower standings were mostly Korean groups.

The Korean server was showing more dominance in the group matches instead of during the individual matches.

Because of the significant difference in caliber, many of the Japanese and Australian spectators didn’t even bother entering the arena building during the fourth day. Instead, they just spent the time outside.

Like that, the Korean faction took over the individual and group matches. So, Korea was the overall victor for the tournament.

In other words, anyone who joined Korea for the faction matches could get the reward for the overall win for free.

It was not like Korea was going to lose something if a foreigner got the overall win reward for free. Actually, they could even add a few conditions to this and make a business out of it.

So, I thought this would give Kim Min-hyuk some headaches. However, instead, when I checked the list, I saw that not a single foreigner joined Korea for the faction match.

“It’s probably because there is still some mistrust. It might have been different if there was no problem through the tournament, but there were. There was a big problem even inside the tournament arena, and there were several problems outside too.”

For the past five days, on daily basis, there were violent incidents.

Most of them were caused by the people who ended up in fighting in their excitement.

In such cases, the Order didn’t go further than moderating the exchange of apologies between people. However, for serious crimes such as murder, rape and gang assault, most of the perpetrators were executed unless agreements between the people were reached quickly.

Could it be that people are hesitant to join the Korean faction because of them?

“Also, this is the first time for the people to be given the opportunity to join another faction. Maybe people are hesitant because the consequences for making such a choice is not yet known. Also, there probably are people who wish to make the change but do not know who to come and talk to about it. Moreover... On our faction’s list of participants...”

What the? Why are you looking at me?

Kim Min-hyuk blurred the end of his sentence and glanced at me. I was dumbfounded.

Are you blaming me?

“Now, now... Let’s cut the chit-chat. Let’s get things organized first. Ho-jae and Jung-ah will be handling the arena. I’ll be handling the spectator seats. Min-hyuk will be handling the outside. Right?”

“Yes. Let’s assign things like that. Everyone, please check the list before the match starts. Let’s conclude the meeting here.”

Park Jung-ah ended the meeting, and Park Jong-shik’s face brightened.

“Well then, let’s go eat, finally.”

Well said.

Let’s stop talking about complicated stuff and just eat.

Everyone started to bring out food from their inventories. However, Kim Min-hyuk tossed out the following.

It was done casually as if he was merely expressing that he was going to the bathroom for a bit.

“I’m getting married.”

Everyone didn’t even bother to react. They just continued to enjoy their meals.

Even I had to take a moment to think about the meaning behind what he just said before realizing what he meant.

“... What?”

This is so out of the blue.

Kim Min-hyuk had been constantly complaining about the life inside the Tutorial, saying we are living in a world where anyone could die the next day, and that this place is hell for couples and a heaven for singles. Now, what did the man just say?

“I said I’m getting married.”

“With who?”

“You met her before during the day of the great harmony. Her

name is Jung Min-jung...”

He gave me a brief description of who she was, specifically noting she her status as the bride.

He said I met her before, but honestly, she was not the kind of person who would be memorable.

I was diligently racking my brain, but Park Jung-ah joined in from the side.

“She is one of the people who decided to stay at the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor, right?”

“Oh, right. You remember her.”

“Yes, Recently, she started helping out with our work in the Order.”

From hearing what Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jung-ah said, it seemed this woman named Jung Min-jung also had given up on clearing the Tutorial and instead decided to live at the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor.

Well, that’s why they could get married and stuff.

Um... It must be nice.

“By the way, why is Big Bro Jong-shik not showing any reaction?”

“I already heard about this once before.”

I wondered why the one who would cause the biggest ruckus about this was staying quiet, but now I see why.

“Hey, but how come are you telling me this now? If you told us sooner, then we could have done a simple marriage ceremony here.”

“Marriage ceremony? What for? Is there a need to draw global attention by doing that here? There probably are more people who would not think kindly of it. Min-jung and I are getting married because we decided to settle down at the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor. As for the

ceremony, we are just going to share a meal with a few people we know at the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor.”

Still, that is a little disappointing.

“There are countless people out there who are fighting brutal battles to move up through the floors. It would be wrong to show people that we are going to settle down here comfortably as if we were gloating. Also, we have a lot of work to do as well, so we didn’t let people know right away. I’ll formally introduce her to you around lunch time tomorrow.”

It seemed he was feeling guilty about being able to live comfortably at the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor.

I don’t think you need to worry so much about that.

It is no easy task to get to the 30<sup>th</sup> Floor to begin with anyway. Also, no matter what others say, when it comes to a wedding ceremony, it would be best to do it properly.

That rascal thinks way too much. It’s a problem.

\*

I had a bit of time left after the meal.

I didn’t exactly have anything to do for the time being. I thought I should call Lee Hyung-jin and train him, so I opened the message window. At that moment, Park Jung-ah called me.

“What is it?”

“Please close your eyes for a moment and give me your hand.”

“Huh? ... Why?”

“Ah, please hurry.”

It was out of the blue, but I did as she asked for now.

“Please give me your right hand.”

... As she requested, I gave her my right hand.

Although I had my eyes closed, I could feel Park Jung-ah moving around busily.

I waited for a bit, and I could feel something cold on my fingers.

I opened my eyes, and there was a strange looking weapon placed in my fingers.

“It is a ring.”

Did all rings in the world melt away and disappear?

“Instead of calling it a ring, it looks more like a knuckle cru...”

“It’s a ring.”

“... All right. Let’s call it a ring.”

Still, no matter how I look at it, it is not a ring.

First of all, it has four holes instead of one.

I think it would be weird to even call it a knuckle crusher.

It has a large needle at the center.

It is not a knuckle... Anyway, this is not a ring. It is a weapon.

If you absolutely want to call this a ring, then that’s fine too, but...

Why did she put this on me all of the sudden?

“That’s Transmutable Thousand Arms.”

“Transmutable Thousand Arms? Oh, it had a form like this too.”

“Yes...”

With that, Park Jung-ah fell to silence.

This is a completely different form. It is not like anything we tried so far.

I never even imagined that such would be possible.

Is my imagination a bit behind other people’s?

While I was thinking this, Park Jung-ah mumbled in a quiet



voice, “I.. I would... like to have one... If you could provide one... for me...”

“Huh? Give you one?”

“Yes...”

This is unexpected, but I can understand it.

The Transmutable Thousand Arms is such a great weapon, and I happen to have two of them.

Still...

“I see. No.”

These are mine.

From the side, Kim Min-hyuk and Park Jong-shik were staring at me and trying to say something at me with their faces. However, well...

These are mine.

\*

[Would you like to enter the arena?]

The faction matches were to be held in two steps. The first match was between Korea and Australia.

The Japanese server went up to the final match by default because they had the fewest number of people participating.

I responded to the message, and I was moved to the arena.

In the Korean side’s formation, the first ones I noticed were Park Jung-ah and other challengers who were not related to the Order of Vigilance.

Most of the challengers who were members of the Order did not participate in the faction match.

The official story was that they decided to stay out of this one because they had been taking wins from everything so far.

However, the real reason was for them to be assigned on the spectator seats and outside of the arena building as the Order of Vigilance's forces.

The total number of participants in the Korean faction was only a little over twenty people.

The participation rate is lower than I expected.

There were all sorts of people participating in the Australian's side.

Wow...

First, everyone from the gang-like groups participated.

It seemed they all participated regardless of individual abilities.

There were about sixty of them.

There are too many of them. This far exceeds the number projected by the Order.

On top of this, there are Japanese server's rankers in the mix.

Even the bearded uncle is there.

There are over twenty of the people from the Japanese server.

Lastly, there were rankers from the Korean server in the Australia's side.

There were Hard Difficulty rankers including Lee Jun-suk and Kim Gyoung-jin. There were other challengers as well, including Lee Chan-yong.

They are all rankers, nineteen of them in total.

I knew of their numbers precisely at least because there was a list.

[The match will begin in 360 seconds.]

The Australian faction was full of confidence.

That guy is grinning more widely with every passing second. It is

spoiling my mood.

What was that bald guy's name? I don't remember.

“Hu hu hu. Is that all? What are you guys going to do? You guys should have gathered up more people even if you had to force them. Did you think it would work out fine to left it on volunteer basis? You ended up with this result because of your complacency, you hypocrite dumbasses!”

The bald head shouted loudly.

He sure is excited, really excited.

“It seemed he spread anxiety among the Korean server's people about something bad happening during the faction match to steer them away from participating.”

“Ah, really? You knew about it?”

“Yes. It is not that I could not stop him. I just left it be. Some people came to tell us about this, but I just told them not to participate.”

I see, so those bastards had been busy.

“Hey, you leftover bastards on the back! It would be wise for you to think carefully even if it is late now. Do you really think your fucking rules or whatever would protect you! In the end, what's important is power! Once that bastard over there dies here, it will be the end.”

As usual, the bald head from Australia was diligently and loudly running his mouth off.

Is he thinking about killing us all here and maintaining the force he has now to take over everyone else?

It seemed he was thinking that he had gathered enough forces to fight all of us even if everyone on the arena at this very moment decided to forfeit and leave the arena.

As for the Korean challengers who were standing behind me,

they ignored the bald head who continued to shout. Instead, they locked their gazes with the bearded uncle from Japanese server.

The bearded uncle nodded with an emotionless face.

“What about the Japanese people?”

“Ignore them for now. They decided to stick to the side who wins.”

In other words, to put it kindly, they are being neutral. To put it honestly, they are going to play bats in the most obvious manner possible.

Well, it is not exactly for their profit. They are doing this for their own safety, but...

“Look! We even have Korean challengers in our side! Not only that, they are very powerful challengers! It is not too late for you! If you side with us, we will definitely guarantee your freedom, rights and rewards!”

Oh my, you think you are participating in some kind of a speech competition?

Your voice sure sounds energetic.

“I’ll skip asking you about the whole freedom and rights stuff. What’s the reward thing about?”

“He is saying they will have the power over each server, and the authorities will be acknowledged by each other. As for the reward... Well... a few items from the people they killed and having their turns with women. It is probably something like that.”

Um...

I felt awkward to hear such a straight explanation.

“I’m shocked that people actually went over to their side because of such terms.”

“There are rankers who hate being restricted by the rules of the Order. Also... as for their sexual lust that cannot be resolved...”

“Ah, don’t tell me about that in detail.”

Not just the sexual lust, but their desire to rule over people must be powerful.

The challengers had been living relatively dull lives in the Tutorial, other than having to face dangers. Living such lives for a long time, the desire must be so strong that it must be hard for them to resist.

In fact, when the Representative Federation gathered up people, they used a similar method.

Park Jung-ah turned to look at the people in Korea’s side.

“Now, everyone. Please pay attention for a moment.”

They had been listening to the bald head babbling on. Now, they gathered up together.

“I’m sure you all noticed this, but I’m afraid it will be hard for us to guarantee your safety in the arena. If you do not wish to participate, please forfeit right away and return to the spectator seats. We will be all right if you made that choice. Even if you forfeit in the middle of the match, you will receive the reward just the same.”

“Is everything all right outside of the arena building?”

“Yes. The members of the Order who did not participate in the faction match are on standby there.”

“Ah, I see. In that case, I would like to take my leave before the match starts.”

“Yes, I apologize for our inconvenience.”

A few of the challengers returned to the spectator seats right away.

“Inconvenience? You don’t need to say that. Well... Will you be alright if we all went back? It would be difficult for Mr. Lee Ho-jae to fight all those people by himself. Won’t it be better if we helped?”

“It would be difficult, but it will be all right if you didn’t stay to help. I have no intention of forcing you to take on the risk that’s unnecessary for you.”

Difficult? No way.

[The match will begin in 60 seconds.]

Park Jung-ah was still talking to the people on the back. I left Park Jung-ah be. Instead, I stared at the front.

I confirmed the signal from Kim Gyoung-jin.

I brought out a dagger from the inventory and placed it on the ground.

After that, to the front of the dagger, five people were teleported from the Australian side’s formation.

Kim Gyoung-jin, Lee Jun-suk and three others whom I didn’t know the names of were there.

“Hey, Ho-jae bastard. Your Big Bro is here.”

“Although I’m seeing this for the second time, this technique is definitely cheat-like. You can teleport without any restriction as long as you have the medium. On top of that, you can teleport with other people too. It is totally a cheat, a super cheat.”

“Aren’t you the one to talk? Your very existence itself is a cheat, you rascal.”

“All right. All right. You have done good work. Ah, you worked hard too, Jun-suk.”

Kim Gyoung-shik gave us the list of the people who defected to Australian’s side and the Australian’s plans.

Kim Gyoung-shik was never close to the Order since the beginning, so it seemed he was able to melt into the Australian's side with ease.

“Yes.”

This rascal still has that pissed look on his face.

Are you still like this because of getting beat up last time?

“By the way... Can we really win? I think the difference in forces is too great.”

Lee Jun-suk... This rascal also carries a mountain of worries inside him.

The worry and anxiety are written on his face.

“Difference in forces? Bullcrap. I will win even if you guys stayed on their side.”

“You are bluffing. If we stayed at their side, then we would win of course. Even now, I think this is going to be a close one even if we fought like our lives depended on it.”

From the side, Kim Gyoung-jin was boasting.

“In that case, why are you butting into a deadly battle where you could possibly die?”

“Why would I die? If it looks dangerous, then I'll just forfeit and bounce to the spectator seat.”

Spoken like a real Kim Gyoung-jin.

Still, including the three who came with them, they are all Hard Difficulty rankers. They would be of great help in the battle.

Lee Jun-suk can launch ranged attacks. With him as the main attacker, the others only have to protect him. If situation changes, then they could continue the fight while switching up the positions. They definitely would be helpful to the battle.

“Jung-ah, why don't you forfeit first and return? Honestly, you

won't be able to help us much.”

“... It hurts to know that I cannot really object to what you said. I will.”

“All right. See you later.”

The battle was about to start soon.

Most of the challengers on our side went back to the spectator seats.

There were just myself, Park Jung-ah, Kim Gyoung-jin, Lee Jun-suk and a few challengers who happened to have a needlessly strong sense of righteousness.

In comparison, as for the Australia's side, they didn't look like they were missing the five people who just came over to the Korea's side. There was no commotion either.

They were still taunting us at the top of their lungs. However, what they were saying was not worth carefully listening to.

I ignored them and formed a long sword with the Transmutable Thousand Arms.

“I'm sure you already know this, but there are people on that side who were forced into this. You must not kill them all. Kill only the ones who are on the list. As for the rest, just neutralize them.”

“I got it.”

“Also... please keep up your fighting spirit. I am sorry I always end up making you handle the difficult matters.”

With that, Park Jung-ah returned to the spectator seats.

[The match will start.]

“I'll handle the offensive measures. Everyone, please stay defensive for now. You guys too.”

I told them that and then turned around.

“Hey, so, is it really going to be all right if we don't help you?”



“Ah, I said it will be all right! If you don’t like it, then just forfeit and watch.”

[Perseverance]

[Talaria's Wings]

Perseverance increased my combat abilities based on various conditions. Just like this skill, Talaria's Wings also improved my combat abilities and suppressed enemies.

In addition,

[Overwhelm]

[Soul Steal]

Overwhelm made the opponents shrivel mentally. I also used the Soul Steal, which dealt damage over time the enemies in the effective area.

Unless it is someone of high floor ranker’s caliber, anyone who approached me with hostility would temporarily fall to a state of panic.

“Oh, what is this? Some kind of a boost?”

It is the first time for me to use these skills in front of others.

Kim Gyoung-jin mutters from behind me. I stepped forward.

[Blink]

In an instant, I pierced into the Australian faction’s formation. I swung my sword toward the bald head.

It was a full frontal maneuver, but they didn’t even notice it. Instead, the bald head was busy yapping away about just how powerful their side was. While in middle of it, he lost his head. It was sent flying.

Meanwhile, the place was full of enemies who still didn’t even realize that I approached them. Still, the black man, who was standing right next to the bald head, noticed me.

Did he say he was at the Sixth Floor of the Hell Difficulty?

Looking at him, I raised my sword.

The black man tried to stop my attack by bringing out a huge bastard sword, but it was no use.

I struck down the sword that I raised up.

The sword was layered with Aura Blade. It smoothly made its way down and slashed through the man and his gigantic sword.

The man's body was slashed through diagonally. Blood spewed out like a water fountain.

Let's wait.

One, two...

Finally, screams started to explode from the surrounding.

Their response is too slow.

There were people who took steps back in a hurry. Some plummeted onto the ground on their butt and struggled on the floor. Watching them, I thought that numbers were meaningless no matter how many there were.

It would not have mattered if there were a hundred or a thousand.

With the Soul Steal, it probably would not have mattered if there were ten thousand.

In the end, this battle is just a fight between me and the extreme few who could respond to my speed.

As for the rest of their forces, which were many, they could not even be small fries or pawns.

People were quickly retreating. Before they could shout forfeit, I used another skill.

[Soul Cry]

It was a crowd control skill that forced enemies to attack me and disabled them from running away.

As for the people who were forced into this, and hence do not truly hold hostilities toward me, I'm okay with them forfeiting.

However, for those who are here to be my enemies willingly, I cannot let them escape.

I was standing in the middle of their formation. However, instead of trying to gang up on me, people were trying to back away as much as possible, even if it was just a step further.

I sighed. They were nothing but a bunch of losers.

I killed the noisy bastard who had been yapping away, and the powerful bastard who was standing next to him. Although these were all I had done so far, nobody was interested in anything but retreating.

Even the skilled ones among the Australian side looked like they were not liking the idea of stepping in first to fight. They were retreating too.

In the chaos, there were people who were glaring at me. I looked at their eyes.

They were Lee Chan-yong and the rankers of the Korean server's Hard Difficulty.

All right. They are worthy of being my opponents.

# Chapter 124 - The Tournament (19)

---

Lee Chan-yong.

He was the challenger at the highest floor in the Korean server.

Until the first tournament happened, people said perhaps he was one of the strongest in the server, along with myself.

People thought it was a certainty for that he would clear 100<sup>th</sup> Floor soon and return to the reality. So, everyone gathered up the messages they wanted to give to their friends and families outside and entrusted their messages with Lee Chan-yong to deliver.

As for the Order of Vigilance, they went beyond just the messages for the families and friends. They even seriously talked about messages or measures to explain to the government.

However, in the past few months, the public's opinion about him was flipped upside down.

The 89<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Tutorial's Easy Difficulty...

He was only one floor away from the residential area at the 90<sup>th</sup> Floor. He was not far from the 100<sup>th</sup> Floor. However, he was stuck at the 89<sup>th</sup> Floor.

Until the 89<sup>th</sup> Floor, the man was unstoppable. However, he ended up stopping here. The reason was simple. The 89<sup>th</sup> Floor was the floor that truly tested the abilities of the challenger.

Lee Chan-yong's goal was just leaving the Tutorial as fast as he can and being reunited with his family.

He focused only on clearing the stages. He neglected the development of his skills and power.

It is true that people grow naturally in the process of trying hard to clear the stages.

However, Lee Chan-yong had been proceeding with clearing stages only with the perfectly-arranged plans of conquest based on the information gathered from the help of the Order and other sponsors.

He had been spending highest quality items and expendable potions like water as he proceeded through the stages. In the end, he was not able to achieve the growth necessary to face the 89<sup>th</sup> Floor.

His determination, focus and abilities to think and find conquest strategies were definitely commendable. However, they meant nothing at the 89<sup>th</sup> Floor.

The stages in Tutorial were always like this.

At one point, it would seem like the Tutorial was telling the challenger should focus on survival. However, all of the sudden, a new stage would test the challenger on something completely irrelevant to survival skills.

The Tutorial would teach the challenger to doubt others, and then it would throw a new stage at the challenger that requires cooperation.

Like this, the requirements for stages are all over the place.

While Lee Chan-yong was stuck at 89<sup>th</sup> Floor for several rounds, other runners who were behind him got to the 84<sup>th</sup> Floor before long.

Now, the situation was that these other people were definitely going to catch up to him. As of result, the people's interest completely left Lee Chan-yong.

Like that, he was forgotten, but how would he be feeling?

He is chewing on his loneliness in the waiting room. At the stage, he is facing a wall that he cannot overcome. His days would have been repetitive of despair and defeat.

I could understand how he must have felt better than anyone.

I have experienced that once at the Sixth Floor.

In the pit of despair, repeating the challenge over and over like a machine...

No, perhaps due to hopelessness, maybe Lee Chan-yong had not even been challenging the stage anymore.

To someone like him, I'm sure an event like the tournament must have been quite thrilling, to the point of making him decide to put everything on the line.

It is very unfortunate.

I understood how he felt, and I sympathized with him. Meanwhile, I was also disappointed in him.

Lee Chan-yong was like a star who shined brighter than anyone.

To protect his family who are outside, he endured the bone-cutting pain of hard work and cleared the stages faster than anyone.

Instead of wallowing in fear about being tossed into a world of unknown, he set a definite goal and charged forward. He was so heroic to watch.

Other challengers who were also concerned about their families and friends all watched Lee Chan-yong and followed his steps.

I was like that too.

There are fifteen enemies.

There are enough to form two or three parties.

They are counted among the top of the Korean server's rankers. Their combination of classes is not bad.

A well-formed party can bring out the power that far exceeds a simple sum of individual members' strengths.

Even against an overwhelming raid monster, a well-formed party

can hunt it down without sustaining any casualties. That was the power of such a group.

So, it seemed they must be thinking that they stood a chance. Even now.

I spent a bit of time killing the bald head and the black man from the Australian server. In that time, they assumed formations and successfully surrounded me.

Although I showed power that was beyond their expectations, they were thinking that they could win if they fought against me as a coordinated group.

Looking at them, I felt bitter.

Before the first tournament happened, Kim Min-hyuk made a proposal.

It started with the notion that preventing crimes by show of force has its limits. The proposal ended with Kim Min-hyuk saying maybe I should hide my strength instead.

I thought it was ridiculous.

Still, as he said, I hid my strength to a sufficient extent.

It was not like I had any reason to reveal my full strength through the tournament anyway.

As of result, before the second tournament started, there was more talk from people saying that perhaps the difference between me and the high-level rankers had decreased significantly.

Some were saying that it is not an overwhelming difference like it was during the first tournament. They wondered if maybe the high-level rankers stood some chance now.

They said I could be handled if a party fought against me, and some said a party would even have the upper hand.

As people talked about such in the community, it seemed these people were thinking they stood a chance.

Of course, they were being delusional.

A strange-looking green arrow flew at me.

I wrapped my body with Talaria's Wings. Instead of dodging, I actually charged in toward the direction where the arrow came from.

The magic arrow and I collided, and green smoke spread wide immediately.

It's poison.

I ignored it for now.

As soon as I started my approach, there were people trying to stand in my path to the mage.

They were the so-called tankers who held the front line and protected the ones behind them.

Their role was drawing the enemy's attention and enduring as long as possible without dying.

I swung my sword and cut off the arm of the warrior in front of me.

I was going to slash through the man's entire body in half like earlier. However, the warrior skillfully twisted his body away.

Right after that, another warrior was throwing a his body at me from the side.

Using my left arm's elbow, I struck his chin to neutralize him. A hook was coming at my ankle, but I avoided it with ease.

Again, I used my sword to cut below the chin of the warrior who had his arm cut. After that, I swung the Talaria's Wings in a large motion.

I shook off other warriors who were trying to stick to me. I layered my sword with mana.

This time, the mana did not stabilize in Aura Blade form. The



sword was full of mana. In that state, I swung it across the air.

The mana was launched to the front. The enemies at the rear of their formation immediately cast a barrier to protect themselves. However, due to the shockwave, they all fell down.

A large crack materialized in the enemy's formation. I charged in further.

Every time the Talaria's Wings swept the surroundings, the tips of the wings, the sharp crystals to be exact, cut the enemies' arms and legs.

When the wings struck down, that struck down an opponent with it.

My sword, which was layered with Aura Blade, was swung. Every time it was swung, the barriers and armor tried to stop it, but in vain. The sword swings resulted in fountain-like spread of blood every time.

The enemies' attacks could not deal much damage to me.

Their swords and spears were not able to pierce through my armor or skin. Magic attacks occasionally flew at me, but they were mostly blocked by the Talaria's Wings.

They moved around quickly and tried desperately to constantly change their formations.

Front and back, left and right... They were trying hard not to get done in by my attacks and distract my focus as much as possible.

They were desperately trying to make a gap in my defense. However, their effort only resulted in making gaps in their own formation.

This was not a simple difference in specs and skills.

Of course, my power skills had overwhelming differences in performance and levels. Still, the difference in the ability and mastery were greater.

The difference between us was essentially the difference in experience.

From the Sixth Floor to the 11<sup>th</sup> Floor...

As I passed through six different stages that required party play, I continued battle after battle.

I destroyed, blew up, bit and beat enemies.

Every day, every hour and minute...

Through those days, during each round, which contained 30 days, I spent all 30 days inside the stages and I never wasted a moment. I focused only on the battles.

During breaks for meals or rest, I spent them by practicing the new things I realized during the battle or new skills I acquired during the battles.

Like that, I even forgot the flow of time. I only had extreme obsession in my head. I sacrificed all my time to do battle. That's how I was able to get through those stages.

There was this difference between me and these people, and the difference was too great.

One after next, the number of the enemies is decreasing.

Also, because of the Soul Steal's effect, every time an enemy died, I regained mana and vitality.

However, the effect felt stronger than the usual.

In fact, I could even feel a sense of pleasure from it.

Moreover...

[God of Death is very happy.]

[God of Death is satisfied with your actions.]

[God of Death is overjoyed by your actions.]

Every time I killed an enemy, the God of Death was showing a

strong response.

Even before this, I had killed many enemies while the Soul Steal was active.

However, this was the first time to see such strong reactions from the God of Death.

What could be the difference?

Because this time, these people are real?

Now that I think about it, this is the first time for me to kill real people.

Nobody cared about this, and I never thought about this either, but actually, I had never killed an actual human being before.

Until today that is.

I just committed murder. However, it didn't trigger any emotional response from me in particular.

After all, I had killed all sorts of monsters throughout the Tutorial stages.

In that case, is the difference a matter of the difference between beings I met in the Tutorial and the living people?

Does that mean the others I met inside the Tutorial stages are not really alive?

Is that the difference?

Having thought this far, the pleasure I was feeling at the moment didn't feel all that pleasant anymore.

It was unpleasant now.

The unpleasant mental pleasure continued for a while.

Before my spoiled mood could fall to the bottom,

“P... Please, spare my life, Ho-jae...”

Lee Chan-yong was drenched in blood. He was begging for his

life. I felt like the blood in my brain was getting cold.

There weren't any enemies left around me.

The people who were not drawn by the Soul Cry all forfeited and ran to the spectator seats. I killed all enemies.

In the end, why did I leave Lee Chan-yong?

Is it because I saw my past self in him?

Perhaps what I'm seeing is my future self.

If I ever reach the limit of my abilities and cannot progress anymore. I wonder how I would look like?

Am I confident that I won't end up like Lee Chan-yong?

"Ho-jae, I... I was wrong. I didn't do this for greed. I just didn't know what I was getting into. I didn't know. I really didn't. I just wanted to participate in a match called the faction match. I had no intention of going against the Order's will or..."

Perhaps, what he needed was time, time to get a hold of himself?

Understanding and conversation?

In the end, although I came this far with this, I feel regretful. I feel like this is my fault.

"You know well, don't you, Ho-jae... I am usually not interested in this kind of..."

I felt the unpleasant pleasure to the end. I put away the Transmutable Thousand Arms in the inventory.

\*

The faction matches concluded awkwardly.

While the match was happening, there were battles taking place at the spectator seats and outside of the arena building.

Unlike the Order's past method of hunting down and executing all related individuals, they based their measures on observation

and reports. The Order executed only the ones they were absolutely certain of being criminals. As for the rest, they stopped at just giving them warnings.

Compared to the past, the Order's method was a little less harsh. However, the people who watched it all happen had horrified looks on their faces regardless.

Also, their gazes on me were...

As usual, the executions carried out to solve the problems gave birth to new problems.

In the process of minimizing such problems as much as possible, Park Jung-ah and Kim Min-hyuk became extremely busy. I didn't want to be in middle of all that. So, I decided to leave the tournament quickly.

Park Jung-ah pleaded with me and asked me to wait until the last day when her work was done. However, when the sixth day of the tournament came and it was possible for me to leave immediately, I returned to the waiting room.

I was disappointed.

If possible, I wanted to be at the tournament with everyone to the last day with a brighter atmosphere.

It would had been nice if only good, pleasant things happened.

No matter how I think about this, I'm saddened by how the tournament went.

There was no information about if there was going to be another tournament. That made me feel even more sad.

I had no idea when I was going to meet them again, yet this is how I parted with them.

Again, I'm having regrets after the fact.

I developed a bad habit.

[Welcome to the waiting room.]

The waiting room was completely empty. I sat on the bed.

It was a world where I was all by myself.

Of course, the conversations were still in full swing in the communities. In the lower floors of the Hell Difficulty, there were other challengers including Lee Hyung-jin.

However, not a single one of them were directly related to me.

That's how I felt.

The empty waiting room felt strange.

Usually, it was only obvious that I would be in this place. I was away from this place for just a few days due to a special event. That was all.

However, I was not able to come to terms with that easily.

Instead, I was thinking about how this place was god-forsaken solitary confinement, and I should be having fun spending time with the people on the other side.

I felt lonelier than how I felt before the tournament.

It had only been six days with the people. Could it be that my mind became weak because I was feeling the warmth of the people through those days, although it was not much?

Compared to the first tournament, which was only for three days, this tournament was longer only by three additional days. However, that difference felt huge.

It had not been long at all since I came back from the tournament, but I was regretting my decision once again.

The people I met and chattered away with at the tournament...

The people I met and spent a few days with at the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, the Holy Knight, Knight, Mercenary, Adventurer, and Mage (although she turned out to be a doppelganger.)...

The monks who I had conversations about the combat methods and philosophies after duels at the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor...

Idy who was with me through the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor and taught me the joy of daily life instead of the battle and conquest in Tutorial...

I wanted to have conversations with them.

Anyone of them.

I opened the skill window and read the description about the Dead Summon skill.

I thought deeply about summoning Idy to help my loneliness.

After agonizing over it, I relinquished the thought. Instead, I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory. I quietly started to hurt myself.

Like that, I waited for the stand by time to pass and time to enter the stage to come.

# Chapter 125 - Tutorial 18th Floor (1)

---

[Uncle. Aren't you even curious about what the gods talked about?]

[It's all right if you don't tell me. If you carelessly tell me about them, the gods will hate it. One should receive things gratefully when given.]

[Even if what they talked about are not the good kind of things about you?]

[It's all right. Although I am helping you, there is no need for you to tell me everything at the cost of losing the possibility of getting any help, even if it could pose a danger to me.]

[...]

[...]

[You are saying you won't tell me about what you are doing, right?]

[... Besides this, about the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor, you should be careful. In a way, it could be even more dangerous than any other floor.]

[Please don't divert the subject.]

\*

I stopped moving, and my body was completely recovered by the healing effect of the waiting room.

I put away the Transmutable Thousand Arms and checked the time.

I still have some time left.

I should just go eat.

I had a bit of an egg sandwich left. I brought it out and ate it with a soft drink. However, for some odd reason, it tasted bitter.



My insides felt stuffy too.

I was at the waiting room, so it was not like I could feel hunger anyway.

Let's just eat meat jerkies.

It has been a while since I ate it. I brought out the jerkies and picked up the water bottle.

As I chewed on the jerkies, only its saltiness spun around inside my mouth.

I took a sip of water to wash the inside of my mouth and opened the community forums.

Checking the community forums while eating was an old habit.

So, I opened it unconsciously.

My mouth still had the bitter taste of the egg sandwich. I washed my mouth again with water. I closed the community window.

It was a mistake to open it.

It had not been long since what happened yesterday.

People were still talking a lot about it.

Although I had the window open only for a moment, what I saw was...

Again, it is reminding me of my old days as a professional gamer.

I had not thought about it in a long while.

Back in those days, especially when I was not far from retiring, I had heard all sorts of stuff from people over the internet.

Back then, I accumulated so much stress from them.

The community was not like how it was with the internet comments back then. It was not like the community notes cursed and swore at me.

I just noticed the people's surprise, fear and anxiety. From those

emotions, I felt another wall between the people and myself.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: What are you up to?]

I got a message from Park Jung-ah.

Did she finish most of the work?

How should respond?

Should I say that I had been digging the ground like a retard?

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: I was not doing anything.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: See? It would have been better if you left after staying with us a little longer.]

I really should have done that.

To console my own disappointment and regret, I chatted with Park Jung-ah for a while.

\*

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: A wand that has a pre-installed magic spell?]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Yes. Each magic wand form has a pre-installed basic magic spell.]

What she just told me was enough to make my ear pop open.

She was saying that Transmutable Thousand Arms included a wand form that could use magic.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: Tell me the detail of its shape. I'll try it right now.]

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Yes. Please wait a moment. I wrote it down on the notebook... Where is it...]

I tried changing the Transmutable Thousand Arms to the shape that Park Jung-ah explained. As she said, I really could use magic with it.

Of course, it used substantial amount of mana. Also, it was extremely weak in comparison to what I experienced at the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor. However, this was enough.

First, I would be able to sense the elemental type better with this. The elemental type is the key to using magic.

I should be able to get a feel for this as I strike myself with this wand's magic!

Also, to begin with, I was trying to learn magic for only one reason.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Now, you won't have to worry about how to get the great magic resistance!]

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: Yep! It is perfect! It's the best!]

From the start, I was trying to learn magic so I could use it to hurt myself. I was trying to raise my magic resistance with it.

For a while, a magic spell of this level should be enough.

The same could be said about various other types of resistances.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: Hm hm! I was going to boast about finding it by telling you about it on the night of the last day of the tournament.]

Hahaha.

That's unbecoming of her. How adorable.

The reason for her higher tension messages is simple.

It's probably because of me.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: Thank you.]

I'm so thankful for her.

After a brief silence, another message from Park Jung-ah arrived.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: In that case, please grant me a wish as

a way of giving me your thanks.]

A wish?

Why a wish all of the sudden?

Is there something else you want from me?

No, more importantly, is there something I could give to her?

While having such questions in my head, I was writing a brief message back, saying ‘Okay, I will.’ However, another message came from Park Jung-ah.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: You definitively need to keep your promise, Big Bro.]

I deleted the message I was about to send. I just stood there.

Considering Park Jung-ah’s personality, is such a line even possible from her?

The kid used to stutter and blush when we asked her to use casual, non-honorary tone with me.

She had gotten better, but she still called me like a captain.

When it was awkward to call me by a title, then she just omitted the subject of the sentence and just said what she needed to tell me.

Now, she was calling me Big Bro.

After a brief moment of blank spaces, a message arrived. It gave me a glimpse of the situation at Park Jung-ah’s end.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: sklfdj aalekfj geli valkdsj Ah, I’m sorry. I’m nuts. I’m a little drunk. Ah... theois is... Big Sis Yuu-jung sent that message. I didn’t write it.]

I could not help but to smile by myself.

Unfortunately, it was not possible for a person to send the message using someone else’s ID.

It looks like she must be really drunk.

Also, next to her, who is drunk, there must be a dating coach sticking by.

During this tournament, we learned from the Japanese server's challengers that there is a booze that even the challengers of the Tutorial can get drunk on.

We were going to gather and drink together after the tournament ended.

In the end, because of work, it didn't work out.

It seemed Park Jung-ah was drinking that with Lee Yuu-jung as a way to relieve the stress from the tournament.

[Lee Ho-jae, 18<sup>th</sup> Floor: I got it. I'll grant your wish. I already told you this earlier, but thank you so much, in so many ways. Please tell Lee Yuu-jung that I said thanks.]

Even after that, Park Jung-ah rambled on for a while. I dwindled away at the time reading her messages.

Thanks to her, I was able to enjoy the remainder of the waiting time.

Even as she was sending me messages, she was continuing to drink. She could not get any more drunk. She finally said she was going to sleep. With that, the conversation ended.

After the conversation ended, I started to really prepare for the stage.

The waiting time was to end at 12 at midnight. Just before that, Park Jung-ah sent me a final message. I thought she was asleep.

[Park Jung-ah, 44<sup>th</sup> Floor: I'm sorry.]

[The 18<sup>th</sup> round for the Tutorial will begin in a moment.]

[Round 18, Day 0, 00:00]

I headed to the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor Stage through the bonfire room as soon

as I checked the start of the Round 18.

\*

The stage was a bright beach area.

To be precise, it was a tourist city with cool-looking beach. This was the setting of the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor stage.

The buildings were mostly made of stones. They were painted white. The people around there were wearing bright and flashy color clothing.

Based on the buildings, people's clothing and the numerous merchandise on the street, it seemed the place's setting was a little more developed than the medieval period on Earth.

One thing unique about this place was that there were tons of people.

It was as if the day was some sort of a holiday. It was not just at the beach. Even the streets of the city were jam-packed with people.

The scenery was too distant from the concept of danger. I was dumbfounded.

I was surprising to see people not hesitating at all to come within my attack range.

I tried to evade the people and get to somewhere that didn't have many people. However, no matter how far I walked, I couldn't find such a place.

Like that, still surprised, I was walking around the city, but finally, a message appeared.

[The 18<sup>th</sup> Floor's trial will start.]

Description: Welcome to the greatest vacation spot in EeEvan continent.

AoAeo island is famous for its beautiful beach. However, it is

even more famous for the Grand Paramal Festival, which is held only once a decade.

You are a seeker who happened to have arrived at the AoAeo island on the day the festival started.

Unfortunately, before you could enjoy the festivity, there is something that you need to do.

Your client asked you to find and eliminate someone who is enjoying the festival at the AoAeo island.

Please complete your mission.

The target is wearing dark purple clothing on the upper body and black clothing on the lower body.

The target's face is ordinary looking.

As for the height and weight... they are not well known.

The description of the target's appearance will definitely help you a lot.

Wish you the best!

[Clear condition]

Find the target within 30 days and kill the target.

After reading the message, what I thought first was "Where's Waldo?"

I looked for Waldo a lot when I was a kid.

The second thing I thought of was who should I curse at.

As I slowly read the message that described the setting for the stage, curses and swears started to bottle up at my neck.

Oh my... What kind of bullcrap message for a mission is this?

The description of the appearance would greatly help me? Do dogs have horns?

The face is ordinary, and if the height and weight are unknown,

then it means I have no choice but to find someone with the described clothing.

On top of that, the description for the clothing only mentioned the colors. It didn't tell me the type of the clothing.

Bikini? T-shirts? Coat? How should I know?

This information is supposed to help me?

Wish me the best?

I want to let out my frustration at someone.

[God of Adventure is feeling wronged.]

Why would you be feeling wronged?

Now that I think about it, after I finished the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor and when I was just about to leave Kiri Kiri's field, I think Kiri Kiri was about to tell me something about the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor.

However, back then, my mentality was shattered after hearing the theme for the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor, so I didn't care to listen. I went back straight to the waiting room.

Damn it. I should have stayed calm and listened to Kiri Kiri.

Lately, because I had not been needing her help to clear stages, I took her advice too lightly.

Damn it... I should just try finding this target anyway.

\*

Wow. I think I'll go nuts.

There are too many people.

Even the [Everland during the Day of the Children](#) would not be this busy with people.

During the 2002 World Cup that was held in Korea, I think the Gwang-wha Gate Main Plaza was this crowded once.



My view is packed with people. If the target was among them, I am not sure if I could pick the target out of the crowd.

The noise caused by so many people was making me dizzy.

There was blazing sunlight, and the air was humid. The discomfort was stabbing the sky itself.

However, for some reason, people were really enjoying themselves. They were chatting away happily.

Some were even playing musical instruments and dancing on the streets.

Also, when people started doing that, other people who had been passing by came into join the dance.

After that, even more people around the area danced along with the rest.

After that, the people behind them also danced.

Like that, every single one in the street danced.

Like that, as everyone started to dance, the street became completely blocked.

I had no way to move around this, so I had to wait until the dance was over.

The dance ended after about 30 minutes. However, I ended up running into another group of dancing people after walking for a little bit.

The dance fiasco was repeated.

Who has been calling this a festival? This is not a festival.

This is Dance Dance Heavy Labor.

Still, people were smiling as if they were enjoying this.

They were singing, drinking something, and dancing.

They appeared to be very excited and happy, but I could not feel

the same.

If I could not feel the same about what others were happy about, then that only resulted in frustration.

I was getting exhausted from frustration. Unconsciously, I suddenly grabbed onto the wrist of a woman who was passing by.

I didn't give it much thought at all. I just grabbed the wrist.

If I must find a reason for my action, it was because something moved in front of my eyes when I was giving the world a blank stare. So, I grabbed her wrist.

I would have understood it if she hated having her wrist grabbed all of the sudden by a stranger. However, she smiled widely and asked what it was about.

Now that I had the opportunity anyway, I decided to ask one thing that I was curious about.

“Just when does the Grand Paramal Festival end?”

The woman put up a surprised look on her face for a moment. She then responded as if she understood.

“Ah! You must be a foreigner who does not know much about the Paramal Festival!”

“Yes, well...”

To be precise, she is right. I'm a foreigner to this place.

“The Grand Paramal Festival continues for a month.”

Having heard what she said, I saw the ground below my feet sinking. I felt like I was falling to the depth of abyss.

A month?

The condition of clearing the stage was finding and killing the target within 30 days.

I thought this festival would not last long; it would last three days at the most.

However, she told me this will go on for a month.

This is hopeless.

“It looks like you don’t know how to enjoy the Grand Paramal Festival. Why don’t you come with me to where my group is? I’ll tell you how to enjoy the festival. First, try this drink.”

She handed me a bottle of the drink she had on her hand as she explained in exhilarating tone.

The bottle contained blue, luminescent drink.

Everyone in the street was holding one.

Anyway, the drink is not the important issue here.

Huk... What is this? Am I being picked up by a woman?

Along with that, negative keywords such as kidnapping and organ trading came to my mind briefly.

Agony after agony zapped through my head.

Should I just follow her?

Should I just follow her and try enjoying the festival?

It might be fun if I tried.

Also, my mental state is quite dangerous at the moment.

If I relax by mingling with the people, it might get better. I never know.

The stage does not appear to be dangerous in any particular way too.

Finding the target seem to be difficult, but it is not a dangerous task.

Would I ever be able to run into another stage as safe as this one? In Hell Difficulty?

In the first place, it is not like I can see any clues for clearing the stage.

It won't make much difference if I played around for a few days and resumed the search.

I should just use this opportunity to take a long, one month vacation and challenge it again during the next round. That might be the better plan.

Should I just follow this woman?

Such temptations were floating up in my head.

"I'm sorry. I have work to do."

Still, I refused and parted with the woman.

No matter how lonely I was, no matter how hungry for attention and friendship I was, I thought it would be wrong if I aimlessly loosened up and played around.

This is the inside of a Tutorial stage.

My assumption about safety was just an assumption, not a certainty.

Also, I don't understand what the festival is for. I don't know why everyone is dancing and finding the dance so fun.

I must not loosen up.

I got to the front of the tall building that I was eyeing briefly. By the time I got there, it was already almost the end of the lunch time.

I scaled the building's wall and sat on the top.

It was the tallest building in the area, so I could clearly see the surroundings from there.

Now, I should calm down and try to find the target from here.

That day, until the sun went down and the night came, I sat there and watched the street. However, I could not find the target.

[In Korea, there is a holiday called the Day of the Children. It's an official holiday where people get paid day off from work so they

could spend time with their children. As for Everland, please think of places like Disneyland.]

## Chapter 126 - Tutorial 18th Floor (2)

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Last night, I used the flight ability of the Talaria's Wings to fly above the island and check it.

I realized one very disappointing fact.

This island was quite huge.

From the west end to the east end, it would have taken a whole day to walk across. It was that big.

Also, the island was full of people on the ground.

Day and night, the people didn't go to sleep.

As if they had gone insane, the people played and played, as if they had really gone mad.

[Round 18, Day 2, 07:30]

This is the second day since I entered the 18th Floor stage.

I sat on the rooftop as soon as the morning came and started to check the street.

The view was not so different from the day before.

The people were playing around loudly since the morning.

They were dancing with bright smiles like little children. However, for some odd reason, watching them only frustrated me.

At a glance, the whole thing looks like just a glimpse of a great festival.

However, for some reason, they were very strange.

They were all too kind, like a page out of a fairytale.

Am I overthinking this?

Otherwise, could it be that my personality developed a problem?

I knew I could not say no to such questions. That made me feel even more uneasy.

Of the countless people on the street, I saw a middle-aged man. He caught my eyes.

He was not the target.

He was not anyone unique or special either.

He was just a middle-aged uncle with a fat belly.

To explain why he caught my eyes... He was incredibly horrible at dancing.

It was very obvious that he had no talent for rhythm. The way he stumbled around looked unsightly. However, he was dancing harder than anyone.

Also, other people applauded the man and danced next to him.

What a great picture to watch.

On the street, in the faces of everyone, there was no anxiety, panic or frustration. There were no such gloomy faces.

It is surprising.

Since yesterday, I spent whole days sitting at the rooftop observing the people.

However, of all people who I observed from here so far, there wasn't anyone who was not happy.

They were all kind, enthusiastic and cordiality.

It is truly surprising.

It appeared that they were all born for the purpose of being happy and smiling.

The street was busy, so a lot of people fell over from waves of other people.

However, when people did fall, the others smiled, helped to get back up and consoled them.

After that, the people who just fell and got up were overcome by

the good gestures of the others and thanked them.

Other people who were watching this also looked very happy to see their interactions, and conveyed their honest feelings.

Like that, they had conversations and grew close.

The people became friends like that and went somewhere to dance.

Seriously, they were kind-hearted scenes to watch.

The fact that I was finding them strange made me question myself if I was suffering from a shattered personality.

However, I can say this with certainty.

This island is too peaceful. It is unrealistic.

Everyone was innocent and honest.

However, the world and the humans could not be like this.

Something is odd.

Like that, as I watched the people from the roof top, frustration slowly swelled up inside me.

These strangers were all completely empathetic to another and getting along. However, I could not be empathetic to their behaviors, and it felt like this was reaffirming the wall between myself and these other people.

It felt uncomfortable.

[Round 18, Day 2, 11:50]

I had been chewing on meat jerkies for lunch, and I realized a critically important fact.

Because everyone was dancing on the street, I thought this Grand Paramal Festival was a parade-like festival that involved lots of dancing.

I thought it meant everyone was out on the street to enjoy it.



However, when I used mana to look inside a building through windows, I came to realize that I was wrong.

People were playing not just on the street, but also inside buildings.

Not only do I have to observe the street by sitting on the rooftop, I also have to observe the people inside buildings.

This fact alone substantially increased the difficulty of the mission, which was finding the target.

I agonized over what to do from now on. In the end, I had no choice to make a haphazard compromise.

I'll spend a day observing the street while sitting on the roof. I'll spend the next day going inside random buildings.

Next day, I'll go back to observe the street.

I decided to repeat this cycle.

I'll observe the streets on the even numbered days, and I'll observe the insides of buildings on odd numbered days.

I didn't know if this was an efficient method. However, I could not think of a better way.

\*

[Round 18, Day 2, 06:05]

It was late evening.

I was thinking about bringing out yet another meat jerky. However, instead, I headed to a café that I found during the day.

By sitting at the second-floor terrace of the café, I could have a quick meal while observing the street.

In addition, I could check the people inside the café.

Fortunately, as soon as I entered the café, the waiter led me to the second-floor terrace before I said anything.

There were quite a lot of people at the café.

I learned that there were also a lot of people who were enjoying the festivity by sitting and chatting instead of dancing on the streets.

I sat at the second-floor terrace and checked the menu.

First, I pointed at a picture of bread and ordered it.

The menu didn't have any drinks.

The waiter didn't say anything about drinks. He just left with the menu.

I could just bring out water from the inventory, so it doesn't matter, but still...

As I waited for the bread, I checked the inside of the café.

I didn't see anyone who appeared to be the target.

I was looking down the street beyond the terrace. While I was at it, a waitress brought me the bread.

It was not the same waiter from earlier. This time, it was a waitress.

Along with the bread, she brought a glass of drink.

I told her that I didn't order any drink. She said the drink comes with meals no matter what.

It seemed she noticed that I was finding it surprising. She said, "It looks like you just arrived at the island today?"

I wonder why she thought that.

I told her that I arrived yesterday.

"Ah, so you are a foreigner. In addition, you don't know anything about this island's festival. You should have come after learning a bit about the AoAeo Island."

The tone of her voice was that of someone who was lecturing a

tourist who was lacking in preparations.

This didn't lessen my curiosity though.

"How did you know I was a foreigner?"

The waitress covered her mouth and smiled.

Instead of telling me right away, she was smiling. That annoyed me. However, I sensed no malicious intent in the waitress's face.

"Try this drink. You will know."

I could sense a mysterious pride and expectations in her face.

Could it be that they are that proud of this drink?

"Just what is that drink?"

"Paramal. This drink's name is Paramal. It is a drink for wishing world peace."

The waitress left after that.

They said that the name of the festival taking place in this island was called Grand Paramal.

That means this drink is the core of the festivities.

I thought the festival's goals were recklessly indulging in dance or sex. However, it seemed the festival was for advertising this drink that was the specialty of this region.

First, I tried out a bit of the bread that was served.

It was delicious.

It tastes like sweet red beans.

Next is the drink.

It is blue, luminescent drink.

I cast a shadow on it with my hand, and I was able to confirm that the drink was faintly luminescent.

There is a need to seriously think about if I should drink this or

not.

It wasn't that I was simply curious if a luminescent drink was harmful to a human body.

The strangeness I felt from everyone in the AoAeo island...

Also, this is the special drink that everyone is enjoying...

I have plenty of reasons to be suspicious of this.

I personally think this drink is a narcotic of some sort.

I have never heard of narcotics that make people happy and positive. However, narcotics that make people enthusiastic and fun loving might be able to bring out similar results.

Perhaps the drink has something magical.

The problem is this.

Do I need to try the drink to resolve my curiosity?

I am confident about poisons.

I have the great poison resistance.

I have resistance against magic as well.

I don't think it would be enough, but I won't have a big problem as long as it is a small amount.

I thought those and tried drinking it by poking it with my tongue first.

It tastes delicious.

It was sweet.

It tastes like molten ice cream.

I tried taking a sip.

It was not poison.

There was no abnormal response from my body for consuming it.

However, for some mysterious reason, it felt like I was feeling a

little better.

Other than feeling a little better, the drink didn't have any other effect in particular. Let's check it out some more.

That day, I tried three sips of the Paramal.

\*

[Round 18, Day 4, 09:00]

I went to the café right on time of its opening.

Compared to the rooftop, I think the terrace is better for observing the street.

“Welcome, Ho. Bread again today?”

It was Hyang, the waitress I met yesterday.

‘[Hyang](#)’ was her name.

Strangely, everyone in this island had a single-syllable name.

Also, even the foreigners introduced themselves with a single-syllable name.

Are these stage names for everyone like masks on a masked banquet?

I found it interesting.

I introduced myself as ‘Ho.’

Hyang said that my name was unique. She smiled.

I told her that I found her name to be even more unique.

Hyang explained that my name was rare but a great name.

Is that so?

She said she found it amusing that it was similar to her own name.

I asked what it was. She said that my name sounded like her family member's name.

I spent the whole day sitting at the café and observing the street. However, I was not able to find the target.

I didn't do anything in particular while observing, so I wasted a lot of time. Still, it was not boring.

It was quite fun observing the people and checking out how they enjoyed the festival.

Like the second day, Hyang came to be my conversational partner whenever she could.

That day, I drank almost all of a glass of Paramal.

\*

[Round 18, Day 5, 03:40]

It was the fifth day. The dance of madness on the street started to quiet down.

The festival continued for a long time. Could it be that people are getting physically exhausted?

Now, instead of spending whole day dancing, people started to hang out with others whom they became close with.

Also, they became close with others, spent time with them, and then became close with some other people.

There were fewer people dancing on the street. However, it was still bizarre to watch.

Today was odd-numbered day. It was the day for me to search insides of buildings.

I checked out buildings that I didn't get to enter during the third day.

No building barred anyone from entering.

In fact, even private residences of island people allowed people in after just ringing the door bells.

I visited Mr. Gong's home. Actually, this was by a mistake.

His home looked more like a workshop.

It was an unexpected visit due to a misunderstanding. However, having heard the bell, Mr. Gong welcomed me.

It was as if an old friend visited him for the first time in 10 years.

I could not let him know that I rang the bell without realizing that this was his private residence.

At the door, I spent a long time talking to Mr. Gong.

I never knew I was such a great conversationalist.

Mr. Gong invited me in. We continued our chatter at the living room.

I wanted to eventually leave and check other buildings. However, Mr. Gong wanted to have a meal with me.

In the end, I was not able to refuse his invitation. I ended up wasting quite a long time here, much more than I thought.

However, we enjoyed the meal.

Mr. Gong's family members were all kind.

The food was delicious as well.

Lately, I didn't have much of an appetite, so I had been eating meat jerkies or simple breads to handle meals.

After the dinner, Mr. Gong's daughter, 'Gang' said she wanted to go out and play with me.

It was unfortunate, but I had no choice but to say no.

I found a casino and a bar.

I decided to search places like these during the night on both odd and even numbered days.

At the bar, they mixed the Paramal with alcoholic beverages to make cocktails.

This day, I drank three glasses of Paramal.

\*

[Round 18, Day 8, 11:20]

I arrived at the café a little late because I was greeting the people I had become close with.

As soon as I opened the café door and entered, I could hear people greeting me and greeting me with good mornings.

I said hello back to each and everyone individually.

I knew them all. They were also all good people who I was close with.

“Ho, how about coming along with me today again? I’m going to the outdoor swimming place next to the Lion Water Fountain.”

Chun and Chin, the brothers, who were eating their breakfast at a corner of the café, said to me.

Every morning, they took care of breakfast at the café and headed out to the street to play.

I apologized and went past them.

They joked around from behind, so I turned to wave my hand at them.

“Let’s definitely go there together before the festival ends!”

They were recommending the place to me to the end. I told them I got it and sat down.

It was the seat at the window on the terrace. Now, it had become my designated seat.

“Ho! Instead of sitting there by yourself, come here and join me. I’ll treat you for the morning.”

Myoung, who was sitting at a sofa, made the suggestion.

Myoung was a foreigner who came to visit the AoAeo island.

“I’m sorry, Myoung. I like this seat by the window.”



Myoung didn't move to the window seat.

Myoung knew that I had something that I had to do by myself. No, he felt it.

I was thankful for the consideration.

I expressed my gratitude.

It seemed Myoung was overcome by my expression of gratitude. He rubbed his nose and told me honestly that he was feeling that way.

I was surprised by his honest confession, and it also felt great to hear it.

Myoung was happy again because I was feeling happy.

It was a kind of mental resonance.

I sat by the window. I could feel warm satisfaction.

It was not a pretend-sensation.

I felt the emptiness inside me getting filled.

The emotion was possible because of a miracle called Paramal.

In the past few days, I drank Paramal little by little and tried to figure out what kind of effect the drink had.

First, Paramal was not an addictive narcotic.

Next, Paramal was not some substance that influenced one's mental state.

I was not able to confirm yet if it was a type of magical potion.

I have not identified its true nature yet, but I now had a rough idea as to what kind of effects the Paramal had.

This drink connected people.

It allowed the people to share their emotions and feelings.

Being able to feel others' emotions was closer to a disaster than a blessing.

The idea of being able to look under the mask that people wear is awkward and unpleasant, because the insides of most people were not all that clean.

However, it is different in this island.

The people of AoAeo island were pure, kind and honest.

In addition, they were enthusiastic and energetic.

Sharing emotions while being surrounded by such people swept other people into their emotions.

After drinking the Paramal, it came naturally as one spent the time dancing in middle of the street with hundreds or thousands of people tightly packing the place.

I spent my entire life wondering about the insides of people and learned manners.

A thin wall always existed, even between friends or between parents and children.

Shattering such walls, I was facing innocent strangers. I was being overcome with heartfelt emotions.

Also, my emotions were resonating with them.

This feeling, this emotion was... Its pleasure was truly incredible.

I could feel kind, good emotions from the strangers as they were. I was overcome by emotions. The others, who felt my goodness and innocence, also were also overcome by emotions.

How difficult is it to find one good true friend who you can really trust?

Also, how amazing is it when you find such a friend and spend time with one?

In AoAeo island, everyone I met were friends and families who could show themselves as they really were.

I had no need to be suspicious of others. There was no need for

anxiety or drawing lines and putting up manners.

I had no need to be evil.

I had no need to be tough or extreme.

I just needed to indulge in the bliss, put away all worries and enjoy the festivities.

This was the prize of tourism in AoAeo island. Perhaps it was something unique to just the AoAeo island, not found in any other place in this continent or perhaps the world.

Paramal was a drink that could turn me into an angel among other angels.

In other words, it was a drink that led me to the heaven.

“Hello, Ho.”

I saw Hyang who was greeting me. I was glad to see her. I also felt anticipant and excited.

I had something I wanted to ask her today.

“Ho, it seems like you have something you are curious about.”

“Yes, can you give me some time today?”

Of course she had.

There was no way she was going to refuse.

“Of course.”

Hyang smiled and responded. She sat across me.

“I want to ask you about the Paramal.”

“Um... Don’t you know well about Paramel now?”

“Yes, but I want to know about it a little more in detail.

[‘Hyang’ sounds like the Korean word for ‘scent’ or ‘fragrance.’]

# Chapter 127 - Tutorial 18th Floor (3)

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[Round 18, Day 8, 11:25]

“Details about Paramal?”

Hyang didn't pry into the reasons as to why I wanted to ask her about this.

After all, she felt from me that I was very interested in knowing this particular information.

As the Grand Paramal Festival continued on, and as we drank Paramal, the effects of shared emotions among everyone amplified.

Now, we could even have rough ideas on others' thoughts or intents.

During the first day of the festival, I didn't drink any of Paramal. Even after that day, for the first few days, I didn't drink much of Paramal. Despite all that, I was feeling like this.

I am sure that people can see clearly into the minds of the people other than myself.

“What I know are all things that I have heard from other people. I am not certain if they could help you.”

That's a bit unexpected.

Hyang was a native of the AoAeo island. Also, she was the owner of the café which held large quantities of Paramal.

I thought she would be one of the people who knew about Paramal the most.

One thing after the other, she listed the things that she heard about Paramal from other people.

To organize what she told me in the order she explained over time, it was like this: A long time ago, it was during the time when the human empire continued expansion and explored new places

on the continent.

The empire's expedition reached AoAeo island, which was uninhabited at the time.

Also, at the island, the expedition found a temple of an ancient religion.

From inside of the temple, the expedition found the history and the manufacturing method of a mysterious drink.

After that, an alchemist guild was commissioned by the royals, and the guild was able to restore the drink, which could be referred to as the creation of the ancient religion.

Although they only made a small quantity of the drink, it was a success.

This ancient drink was named as Paramal. Using Paramal, the royals tried to spread their ideals that they dreamed of.

Paramal was very difficult to create. So, the supply of Paramal was limited to AoAeo island. Also, the supply only lasted about one month per year.

Lately, the manufacturing rate of Paramal had increased significantly. However, the number of tourists had also increased, so the supply was still lasted to just one month.

Like that, through the Grand Paramal Festival, the AoAeo island became the heaven on the human world for a month per year.

So, the people who were sick of the world all gathered to AoAeo island.

After the festival ends, the donation from the tourists and the influential people of the continent are invested into making Paramal for the next year's festival.

I went to the street after hearing the entire story from Hyang.

Her explanation was like a fairytale. However, there were some parts of it that I found suspicious.

First, when those in power learned the effect of Paramal, would they really want to use it to spread idealism and utopia to the world?

Such people would want to use Paramal on other purpose.

It didn't take me long to come up with numerous ways that Paramal could be abused.

It could even be used to breed fanatics for a pseudo-religion.

Military-wise, they could raise berserkers who only desire battle and victory.

Paramal could also be used in torture and interrogation.

Just looking at the effect of Paramal, it was closer to being a strategic weapon rather than the key to the utopian ideals.

What would happen if Paramal was introduced to some random village's water well?

People will feel the animosities they have harbored without any filter. People will get swept away by the hatred and other emotions.

It probably won't even take a week before the village is destroyed.

If anyone wanted to use Paramal for evil and benefit from it, Paramal could be used in so many methods.

Would the ones in power shun away all of these other possibilities and focus only on using Paramal for bringing happiness to the people?

I am very doubtful about this.

People do not think like that.

My second doubt about the story was this.

How was it possible to fill the people with full of positive emotions?

At first, I thought this was a special characteristic of the island.

I thought that the natives of the AoAeo islands, who were the absolute majority of the island, must be so kind and generous that an atmosphere like this was formed.

However, according to Hyang, AoAeo was originally an uninhibited island. Most of the people here were immigrants.

In that case, when the Grand Paramal Festival was held for the first time, how could so many people possess positive emotions?

If that was not the case, the festival could never have developed into what it is today.

A human being treating others with goodness is not just a matter of the heart.

Also, it is not something that could be faked with lies.

Hyang's story had holes.

Just like the truths behind embellished Aesop's allegories, Hyan's story probably has a darker side that's intentionally and carefully hidden.

The dark side must be related to the secret behind Paramal and AoAeo island. At the same time, I also felt that it must be related to the target.

With such thoughts in my chest, I walked out to the street.

Today was the day for me to observe the street while sitting at the café. However, I thought that resolving my suspicions was more important.

I went out to the street, and many people welcomed me and greeted me kindly.

They were the people who I got to know through the past few days. Also, I was close with all of them.

I responded to the warmth that they gave me. I drank Paramal

that they handed me as well while chatting with them. So, it created in a bit of delay.

I thought I should have the people be on their way. I thought I should excuse myself now.

The people didn't try to hold me up there anymore.

They all felt that there is something I need to do.

Also, they were sympathetic toward me about that fact that I had something so important to do that I had to tend to it despite being in middle of this festival.

Instead of trying to hold me here, they wished that I would be able to complete my work well and return to the festival sooner.

I thanked their heartfelt kindness.

Even if it was for a little while, I suddenly wanted to chat with them.

In the end, even when the sun was about to go down, I was still drinking Paramal and talking to the people on the street.

By then, the suspicions I had inside felt ridiculous. I laughed at the mere idea of it.

I wonder why I cannot see the people and the world as beautiful as they really are?

It was not the world that was corrupted and slanted. It was myself.

The holes in Hyang's story are just that she had to tie many stories she had heard from different people.

I thought of it that way.

I forgot about the fact that I had something I had to do besides talking to the people.

During that day, I drank a lot of Paramal.

I don't remember how many glasses I had.



\*

[Round 18, Day 13, 14:20]

I developed a worry lately.

It was the worry about clearing the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor Stage.

Last night, I had so much fun at the masquerade dance. While I was there, I realized something.

It was the fact that I was in a Tutorial stage.

I had been forgetful of this.

Once the month passes, the round was going to end.

After that, I was going to be teleported to the waiting room.

I cursed at the fact.

However, I could not change the natural order of this design.

So, I had to make a decision.

How long will I stay in this place?

I wish I could stay in AoAeo island forever. However, I knew I cou.....

Is that really the case?

Why couldn't I stay in AoAeo island forever?

I could.

In fact, I could enjoy the Grand Paramal festival, which was actually held for only a month per year, forever, for the rest of my life.

I just needed to stay at the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor stage forever. That would solve everything.

From time to time in the middle, I will have to stay all alone for three days of waiting period. However, I could more than handle that.

Why should I escape from this heaven?

“Ho, what are you thinking about so hard?”

Hyang brought me pancakes for lunch. She asked me that.

I pondered about it for a moment and responded to her.

“I am not sure.”

What was I thinking so hard about until a moment ago?

Wasn't it something pretty important?

“Ho, I thought you were thinking about the bet.”

“The bet?”

What bet?

What could she be talking about?

Having heard what I said, Hyang opened her eyes widely and said, “Ho, by any chance, you didn't hear about the bet?”

No. I have not.

It seemed Hyang was finding this amusing. She covered her mouth with her hand and laughed. She then asked me, “Do you have any idea how many people are targeting you?”

Depending on the situation, this would send the chill down my spine.

If I heard this while being anywhere else, I would have intensified my mana immediately and prepared to fight off attacks.

However, AoAeo was not that kind of place. I wasn't going to do that here.

It's been 14 days since the Paramal festival started. Everyone had good feelings toward each other.

Because of that, I didn't know.

“Who would target me?”

“Uh uh. It looks like you really don’t know about the bet. Do you have any idea how many customers ask me about you?”

“They ask you, Hyang? What is the bet? Why are they doing that?”

“It is a bet on who would seduce you first. Everyday, number of girls who are rejected by you are growing. So, the sum for the bet is growing bigger with it. Soon, it probably will become the largest bet among the women.”

Um... I really didn’t know such bet was happening.

That explains it. I wonder why there were so many girls who were trying to take me to secluded places.

Although it was unintentional, I had been acting like I was not interested in sex.

As of result, I ended up being even more popular. I felt awkward about this.

As the festival went on, people became more and more open.

I could even say that they were becoming disorderly.

Well, it is not a bad thing, so...

I heard from the Ching and Chun brothers that sex while in the state of having shared emotions from drinking Paramal was absolutely astonishing.

Perhaps this is the reason why. They said they had been having sex with women every night.

On top of this, they had been laying with different women every night.

I didn’t really want to do that.

I was already feeling the bliss at every moment. Instead of spending intimate, private time with women, I wanted to spend as much time as possible chatting with as many people as possible.

Maybe it is because of the loneliness I felt before coming here.

“Honestly, I bet a substantial amount of money on it too. So, you need to keep up your strength, even if it is for my sake.”

She said so in a tone that was like a mischievous friend. Hearing what she just said made me wonder about one thing.

Most people I was friends with knew Hyang.

Everyday, they had been sitting at her café and spending long time here. So, it was only obvious.

“Hyang, who did you bet on?”

Hyang smiled big and said,

“Myself.”

That day, I really drank a lot of Paramal.

\*

Feeling the cold rain drops fell on my face, I woke up.

Unlike the usual, I fell asleep on the roof. So, I didn't have a roof over my head to cover myself from the rain.

I quickly brought out a tent from the inventory and entered.

I always thought this, but the portable tent is very useful.

I dried my hair with a towel and checked the time.

[Round 18, Day 17, 16:20]

Wow, this is crazy.

I went to sleep last night at 11 pm.

After that, I woke up at 4 pm.

If it was not for the rain, I would have slept longer.

I think this is the first time for me to be so lazy since the day I was ever born...

No, this is the first since Kiri Kiri used that strange magic on me.

It had not been long?

I ended up sleeping in so much because I had enjoyed excessive amount of Paramal bomb drinks that were mixed in with strong liquors.

It was so strong that even I, who had the great poison resistance, could not endure it.

Ever since I entered the Tutorial, I had thrown up before from being hit on the stomach or from dizziness. However, it was a first for me to throw up due to excessive drinking.

I broke the bar's record and won in a drinking battle against six others. I remembered what happened yesterday.

Still, it was fun.

I was a mess, but there was fun from being like that.

Everyone at the bar all drank until they lost consciousness, so it was a sight to behold.

I also came up to the roof after losing my half my mind.

If that was not the case, then I would not have fallen asleep at the roof top.

Like that, I went over what happened last night, one thing at a time.

It was fun. I was happy.

As I went up through the memories, I thought about what my experiences on AoAeo.

Each and every one of thing that came up in my head were the kind that warmed my heart. They were happy memories. However, I did not feel comfortable inside.

How should I put it...

It was like the anxiety that came after playing around when I had a test coming up and I should have been studying instead.

To think I was feeling uncomfortable...

I thought it was strange that I was feeling melancholy and awkward instead.

So, I looked for reasons.

I had reasons.

It's been 17 hours since my last drink of Paramal.

I violently vomited what I had inside.

I felt the cold rain.

So, the Paramal's effect had faded.

Thanks to that, I think my head is running a little more objectively.

It is true that the life here was blissful. It is true that I had been struggling with loneliness. However, I must not be so complacent.

I went over and organized the things I had to do, one by one.

I already knew them.

However, I had not been doing them for the past few days despite the fact that I should have been.

I had been putting off and then some. In the end, I forget about them.

If I didn't forget them, I tried hard to bury them by saying that they are not important.

This is the worst.

For the past few days, just what was I doing?

From inside the tent, I watched the pouring rain. I felt anxious. I was worried if something important inside me had been spilled already.

## Chapter 128 - Tutorial 18th Floor (4)

I just sat there vacantly inside the tent and thought about this.

If I continued like this, then I won't be able to do anything. I'll be only swept up by the festivities and Paramal.

No matter how happy I was about the life in this place, and no matter how much I want to stay here even after this round, I must do what I have to do.

I didn't know if this was out of the hardworking attitude I became accustomed to or if it was due to obsession. However, I was feeling the unpleasantness of putting off what I should do.

Instead of kicking myself over this, let's think about what I can do to resolve it.

It won't matter how firmly I make up my mind. Once I get to the streets, meet people and drink Paramal, then I'll forget all about what I am supposed to do.

I should move while avoiding people as much as possible.

It would be alright if I fly at a high altitude using Talaria's Wings.

Next, I need to decide the time for me to make the move.

The best time would be when there are the least number of people around.

It's already evening, but it would be better if I waited until the night.

The effect of Paramal inside my body will fade even more by then, so it is a good decision in many ways.

I lay down again as I thought that.

If I am going to wait until the night, then it would not be a good choice to stay awake with my eyes wide open.

My will had weakened a lot.

If I am to continue thinking about useless stuff for hours while being awake, I might end up wanting to come down from the rooftop and drink Paramal.

A while back, there was a time when I wanted to eat sweet treats over and over and then some more as if I was addicted to sugary substances.

The symptom came with extreme lethargy.

Back then, what faded the symptoms away was sleep.

I spent the time by sleeping, and while I was sleeping, I was staying away from the sweets.

Like that, only after spending the time away until the symptoms subsided, I finally felt like I didn't want to eat sweets anymore.

I had to maintain steel-cold focus to find information and identify the target. In order to do that, I had to stay away from Paramal for a while.

So, I decided to go to sleep.

I lay down and closed my eyes. I felt good, just a little.

It has been half a year since I could no longer sleep comfortably inside stages.

I was able to fight off sleepiness easily, so it was convenient. However, I was not able to sleep even when I wanted due to the insomnia. It was a painful illness.

However, now, after two weeks since I came to AoAeo island, I could close my eyes and sleep anytime I wanted.

Although I stayed away from festival and Paramal for the day because I had something to do, doing this reminded me how great of gifts they were to me. They were like blessings.

After I finish everything I have to do and resolve all of my suspicions, what should I do next?



If I find the target too?

Do I need to kill the target and leave this place?

No, that's not it.

I can answer this question with certainty.

No.

I won't be clearing the stage in this round.

It might be the next round. Perhaps it might be the round after the next.

Anyway, it won't be in this round.

I didn't want to just let go of the bliss I was feeling now.

I will have to leave this place one day. However, that day would be after feeling enough of the happiness and preparing my heart for the leaving it all behind.

When I could shake off all those foolish regrets as well. When I am ready to go on again...

I don't need to hurry.

I am more than happy to be here, so...

Deep inside my heart, I had a feeling that I might end up living in this place forever.

I really might do that.

To me, this world, the AoAeo island is the greatest blessing and happiness I could ever receive.

I might never be able to escape this place.

However, even if that happens, that won't be so bad.

I'll be happy in this place for eternity, so...

As I thought about those, my heart felt lighter.

Instead of hesitation, my desire to quickly find information about

the place and go back to the festival grew.

At least for the day, I'll be able to focus on searching for the information and the target.

I felt proud of myself. With that, I fell asleep.

\*

[Round 18, Day 17, 23:00]

I woke up from my sleep and checked the time. It was 11 pm.

I really slept through the whole day today.

I looked outside the tent. Before I realized, the rain had already stopped.

I went outside, put the tent away into the inventory and stretched my body.

After that, I thought about eating some meat jerkies to quench my hunger. However, I feared that I might want to drink Paramal if I put anything in my mouth, so I decided not to.

I should drink all I want after finishing the work for the day.

Perhaps because it was late at night, the street was relatively empty.

Of course, there were many who were energetically playing around even in this late hour.

I'm sure there are many who are chatting away loudly while drinking Paramal cocktails. Moreover, I'm sure there are a lot of people who are having intimate encounters at the moment.

Anyway, so, there weren't that many people on the street.

I brandished the Talaria's Wings and went up to the sky.

I increased my altitude. I tried my best to not get connected to the people's emotions.

I had not drunk Paramal for a whole day, so its effect had become

diluted. However, it was not gone.

As I thought, as I raised the altitude, the effect of Paramal weakened.

Paramal's effect was affected by the distance, view and recognition of presence by others.

Just flying through the dark night sky could reduce its effect to sufficiently low level.

The first destination was AoAeo's government office.

I already had checked its location a few days ago, so I was able to find it right away without getting lost.

I lowered the altitude and entered the main door of the office.

Perhaps because it was middle of the festival, or perhaps because it was late, the office was empty.

It bothered me that I would be sneaking in here to look for things in secret, but thanks to that, I could look around all I want as I wish.

“Kuuuhuuuuk!”

I was walking through the deserted corridor of the government office. However, out of the blue, I heard someone scream.

I was surprised. I looked at where the scream came from. There was a man. He appeared to be an employee of the place. While sitting on his chair, he was lying on the desk.

“Kuhuk! Hmmm..... Kuhuk!”

It was not that he was dying. He was sleeping like that and snoring.

What a bizarre snoring sound.

For a moment, I watched the man snoring, going kuhuk-kuhuk.

I worried that he might really die sleeping like this. So, I shook his shoulder and woke him up.

“Um... Huh? Ho? Why are you here, Ho... Aaaaaauuuuummmm... What time is it?”

“It’s past 11 pm.”

I knew the man.

I met him a few days ago at the bar.

“Your name is Byoung, right?”

Byoung nodded and yawned.

“Uuuhaaaaam. I was going to shut my eyes for a bit, but I ended up sleeping until 11 pm. What brings you to the government office? On top of that, you came in such a late hour.”

As he started to have a conversation with me waking up completely, his emotions started to pour into my head.

I could feel his curiosity about me being here at this hour, his gladness in seeing me, and his desire to go have fun at the bar with me who just happened to show up.

They were ordinary emotions. However, for me, I could not be more thankful for such.

They were clean, kind and honest.

I thanked him greatly just for exhibiting such emotions toward me.

Also, I wanted to go to the bar with him.

I bit my lips and fought off the temptation.

No matter how happy I was, I did not want that right now.

I was not saying I wanted to be unhappy.

I just didn’t want to get swept away by it.

I was happy, but it would be the true happiness if I enjoyed it when I wanted.

This was a matter of pride.

I suppressed down my desire to go play with Byoung. Instead, I asked him to find information with me.

“Well, okay.”

I was asking him such a bothersome thing to do in middle of the night. However, he gladly said accompanied me.

I was thankful.

\*

“This is surprising.”

I read the paper which was packed with numbers as I said that.

In the paper that Byoung found for me, it did not contain the content that I was looking for. However, it contained something that definitely concerned me.

“What is?”

It was about the number of people who resided in AoAeo island.

From what I already heard from Hyang, I knew that everyone who lived in this island were immigrants.

However...

From the report, over nine percent of the foreigners who came to participate in Paramal Festival also settled at the island.

This is too many.

Thanks to this, the population in AoAeo island had been growing exponentially.

Considering the rate of increase... I even wondered if it would be possible to hold the festival properly because there were way too many people.

This year looked like it was already approaching the full capacity.

The streets, restaurants, bars, and everywhere in the island were packed with people.

If the current number of people stayed in the island, and if more foreigners were to be added to the mix next year...

Next year, the number of people gathered here would definitely pose a problem.

It would be enough to cause problems for holding the festival.

“What is it?”

Byoung asked me from the back.

It is probably because of the uncomfortableness I was feeling.

His sense of concern for me was being transmitted to me.

Feeling the sensation, I haphazardly excused it.

Considering the numbers, assuming that there is some kind of plot hiding in the shadows of AoAeo island, it must be this year where it all happens.

It could be that I’m worrying too much. I am hoping that I’m worrying too much. However...

Besides this, I didn’t find any other information that could serve as clues.

Although the following was not a part of the information we dug up, Byoung did tell me an interesting and plausible story.

“Crimes?”

“Yep. Well, it seems they actually did post guards and all that before the festival started.”

“Why? What kind of crimes are there?”

Crimes in AoAeo island?

I have never heard of or seen crimes here.

In fact, for the past 17 days, let alone any serious crime, I have never saw once a customer leaving before paying.

“Theft and kidnapping or other kinds of crimes seem to be or not

seem to be occurring. That's what I've heard."

What could that mean?

"I'm saying they are only on documents. The victims are not reporting them, so we cannot be sure if such crimes actually happened."

"Where did such suspicions come from?"

Crimes happened although there are no victims?

"It seems that the families of the tourists who participate in the festival occasional make inquiries. I don't think we can be certain about these, but they probably posted guards since there were inquiries."

"I have never seen any guards?"

"I'm sure you have not."

From his brief answer, I could figure out the gist of it.

The guards who drank Paramal in middle of the festival would not believe that crimes and that criminals exist in this heavenly island.

Anyone who drank Paramal would never harbor animosity toward others. Also, anyone who is at the AoAeo island, and those who know about the effect of Paramal, would not refrain from drinking it.

So, the guards who concluded that crimes do not exist in this place will just go and enjoy the festival.

"It's obvious."

Crimes in AoAeo island?

That would be so unbecoming of the place.

Reports of crimes without evidence or victims...

"The people back home probably sent those inquiries because the people who came to the island to enjoy the festival spent too much

money or ended up settling down here.”

I could only continue to nod after hearing Byoung’s opinion.

Usually, it was only natural to think that way.

\*

With Byoung, I looked around the government office and gathered data. After that, I resumed my flight to head to a place that had once been the holy temple of the ancient religion.

Before I left, Byoung said that it was late and recommended that I should go to the place and we should head to the bar instead first.

I really wished I could go with him, but sadly, I had to refuse.

Today, I was going to finish all matters that were bothering me. My plan was to relax and play starting tomorrow.

After flying briefly without any difficulty, I was able to arrive at the place marked as the place of holy temple of the ancient religion.

It was a pretty big area.

In the middle of the area, there was a platform that was moderately high.

There were traces of things indicating that there may have been structures above this platform.

With the platform as the center, there were ruins of tall pillars everywhere.

It seemed this place definitely was the place where the holy temple once was.

Although it was late at night, there were quite a few people walking around the area.

There were some people chatting while sitting at the area with snacks and Paramal in their hands. There were people who were dancing and those who were watching.



As usual, it was pleasant to see them.

I wanted to join them.

The place where the holy temple used to be didn't have anything suspicious in particular. So, I was really thinking about joining the people. However, I found someone.

There was a tall man.

The man was wearing a fluffy robe.

The robe was coming down to the knee. Below the knee, I could see that he was wearing a thick pants.

These were the problems.

The man's robe was dark purple. His pants was black.

It was late at night, so it was hard to tell the color. However, I could be sure of the colors after squinting my eyes at him.

That man was the target of the clear condition.

Um...

There are so many people gathered in this plaza, but I noticed the man. Actually, it was not unusual that I thought the man stood out.

He was strange.

His behavior and the expression on his face were both strange.

His face was super stiff. There was a sign of frustration on his face. As for his behavior, it seemed he was not caring about the people around him at all.

Moreover, no emotion was flowing out of the man.

It seemed this target was not sharing emotions with others.

Ah, I get it.

That bastard did not drink the Paramal.

I became curious about the man's identity.

Could he be the one hosting the festival?

Perhaps he is a priest of the ancient religion. Maybe he is one of the alchemists who are said to have restored the Paramal.

It is also possible that he came from the royal house. Perhaps he is not related to Paramal at all.

There were many possibilities. However, I did not have enough facts to make certain of any of the hypotheses.

The target was just sitting in middle of people. With bored face, he was just writing something on his notes.

Um... What should I do?

I pondered about this for a brief moment, and then I came to a conclusion.

I should find out who he is.

Also, I should learn information about what the target is trying to do.

Also, I should not kill him right away.

I should make full preparations so that I could kill him when I make up my mind to clear this stage after getting a full rest in AoAeo island for a few rounds.

After all, although I am not intending on leaving this place right away, I will be leaving eventually. So, I should gather information about the target.

All right, I should do it this way.

After finishing making the decisions, I thought about how to approach the target without being noticed while the man was in middle of many people.

I think it would be hard for me to approach him without being noticed when the place is so busy like this.

It would be easier to make him come to me.

First, I used the Overwhelm and Soul Steal at that target.

I focused the effects on just him so the skills would not affect the other people.

Out of the blue, the effects of the Overwhelm and Soul Steal were felt by the target, and the target's look on the face had turned dark.

The target suddenly got up and looked around.

I waved my hand and let him know who I was.

Next was using the Soul Cry.

He was recognized as enemy. So, due to the effect of the skill, he won't be able to escape me. He will come to me, the one who used the Soul Cry and is trying simultaneously to avoid the people.

This is perfect.

[Soul Cry]

I slowly stepped back and used the Soul Cry.

As I thought, the target started to walk toward me. He looked as if he was mesmerized.

Things were going as I planned. I was feeling satisfied. However, at that moment, the target put his hand under his clothes and brought out a purple gem stone that was shining brightly in fluorescent color.

“ .! .!”

Toward the sky, the target shouted words that were incomprehensible to me.

I had heard this tone and pronunciation before.

It was at the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor.

Those were Rune words to activate magic.

At that moment, everyone at the plaza turned their head and looked at me.

They were burning with a powerful animosity toward me.

## Chapter 129 - Tutorial 18th Floor (5)

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As soon as I faced the gazes of everyone at the plaza, there was no way for me to ignore the eeriness of it all.

All those people turned their heads at the same time and looked at me. It reminded me of a scene from a horror movie.

There were things that amplified the eeriness. There were some people who were standing at angles such that it would have not been possible to simply turn their heads to look at me. However, even those people strained their bodies and necks to turn and look at me.

As if they were programmed, or perhaps as if they were puppets on strings, they ignored the discomfort or pain and firmly executed the movement of turning to look at me.

What I felt next was their hostility. They came at me like tidal wave.

Each and every person glaring at me were burning with a vigorous hostility as if they were facing their life's worst enemy.

Also, their emotions were delivered to me directly through the effect of Paramal.

[Talaria's Wings]

[Blink]

I spread my wings and flew up to the sky.

To make it quick, I used all five of my Blink charges.

I did this because at that instant, I came to an immediate conclusion that I must draw distance from the surface where the people were.

My decision was correct.

An incredible wave of emotions, the kind that could not be

handled by one person, came rushing at me.

Animosity and fury.

Frustration, hatred, fear, anxiety and disgust...

All sorts of negative emotions were engulfing me.

With the flight effect of the Talaria's Wings, I floated up far above in the sky. I was at a height where I could not even see the people very well any more. Staying in the air, I thought about things.

It isn't just the people at the plaza that are like this.

Everyone on AoAeo island are all pouring out their negative emotions at me.

The strength of the emotions isn't something that's possible with just the people who are gathered at the plaza, which appears to be around a hundred people.

I'm this far away from everyone, yet the emotions I feel are so vivid. They are giving me headaches.

Uuuuuuuuuuuuuaaaaaak –

From the sky, I threw up below me.

My head was pulsating. It was dizzying. As if those symptoms are not enough, now, I felt like my brain was going to melt into mush.

For the past few days, I had become used to the shared emotions through Paramal. Also, I had been feeling happy from it. In my current state, the negative emotions being poured at me were incredibly fatal.

The negative emotions filled my head. Soon, even I got swept away by the emotions.

The evil intents dyed my emotions swifter than good intentions could replace them.

I was feeling hostility, disgust and unpleasantness toward myself.

My arm, full of mana, was flinching in the attempt to attack me.

[Perseverance]

Perseverance was God of Adventure's power skill. It strengthened me in proportion to the number of enemies I faced and their power.

As soon as I used the Perseverance, the effects of the people's negative emotions started to lessen on my mind and body.

I was not completely fine. However, I could avoid committing suicide from being swept away by the emotions.

One thing became clear now.

They were my enemies.

That fact broke my heart. I could not stop tears from welling up.

Kill him. Attack him. Hate him. He is your enemy. He is our enemy.

I threw up again and emptied my insides.

It seemed like the voice was controlling the people.

If I didn't have the Perseverance and Mental Corruption Resistance, and if I did not intentionally try to stay away from the Paramal, I may not have been able to escape the voice's commands.

Damn it.

Again, towards the ground below, I emptied my inside.

Before long, my face became a mess with flowing tears.

Just until yesterday, they were the people who were laughing and chatting with me. They were happy.

Also, as I stayed with them, I was happy as well.

AoAeo island had become a place of rest for my heart.

Before I came to AoAeo island, I was in despair about one thing.

I had been grinding inside Hell to survive. Before I realized, my

heart had become hell.

I thought that the place I am at will always be hell, no matter where I was or who I was with, even if I escaped the Tutorial. Such thoughts have always been revolving around inside my head.

It was the people of AeAeo island and the festival that healed me of those cancerous thoughts.

At this place, I thought that I would be able to finally get away from nervousness and obsession that was engraved so deeply in me for so long.

In fact, I had.

Now, the angels from the heavens were cursing me. Their condemnations chained my heart down inside the depths of despair.

I could not handle the fact that they despised me so much.

Facing the cruel reality, I screamed out. However, nothing changed.

The power of the curse only grew stronger with time.

Below my feet, the plaza was full of people.

Everyone from the island was gathering at the plaza.

There was no guarantee that I would be able to endure this headache. It felt like my head was going to shatter.

At this rate, my brain will get fried or I would end up giving up everything after my will is exhausted. Either way, devastation is inevitable if this continues.

I checked my body's condition.

Slowly, I tried to calm my breathing.

Tears continued to pour out, and my sobbing hindered my breathing. However, I forced myself to suppress my crying and breathe in rhythm.



As I thought about the battle, even in this situation, my body was being controlled independently from my emotions. That fact saddened me even more.

I made up my mind after raising my hand to wipe off my tears.

I should descend.

As soon as I descend, I should kill that bastard, end this bullcrap, and free the people.

Once I kill the target, the clear condition would be satisfied. Naturally, I will have to leave the island. The thought zapped through my mind.

Even in this turmoil, I still had lingering regrets.

I was careless.

My obsession to move on and my foolish desire to stay at AoAeo island were combined, and I went ahead with a stupid idea.

As soon as I found the target, I should have attempted a clean assassination. Otherwise, I should have just confirmed the location of the target and retreated quietly without a trace.

I had chosen the worst possible option.

Everything that was happening down below was my fault.

It happened because of me. So, I must resolve it.

Also, for the sake of those people, I should do this as quickly as possible.

Ugh.

I brought out Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory. I formed one into a shield. I shaped the other into a long sword.

Let's go and end this.

I slowly descended from my altitude.

I will find the target, descend immediately and kill him.

The target was hiding among the people. He was hard to find. I looked for the target as I made my descent. However, negative emotions strongly resonated inside me.

In addition to the emotions I already had been feeling, the sense of pain, despair and fear were added.

I thought that the people must be feeling such emotions from watching me come down from the sky. Thinking about that made me feel terrible once again.

At that moment, I heard a voice echoing in my head.

It was incomprehensible.

After that, my sight suddenly brightened.

Hundreds of thousands of people tightly packed the plaza and the streets, and the people shouted at the same time, "Fire Arrow!"

It looked as if the ground was coughing out flames toward me.

Several hundred thousands of Fire Arrows were launched toward the sky at once.

The sight was overwhelming. Also, the mana I felt was astounding. I could not help but panic.

There was no way for me to dodge all the Fire Arrows launched toward me.

I descended while covering my body with the shield and Talaria's Wings the best I could.

I tried to avoid as many of the arrows as possible. However, the Fire Arrows tightly packed the space above. I had to block most of them with my body and the wings.

Talaria's Wings and great magic resistance's effects...

Also, thanks to Perseverance, which was currently demonstrating the far greater boost effects for combat abilities than anything before due to facing the most powerful enemies I

ever encountered, I was able to avoid becoming a roasted chicken. Instead, I survived and was able to descend to the surface.

Perhaps because I was much closer to the people now, their emotions and suffering felt much more intense.

Their suffering felt as vivid as if they were my own.

No. Actually, it was more intense than my own.

How many of these people know how to use magic?

Probably not many. Most of them were ordinary people.

Despite that, they all shot flames into the sky.

I had no idea how it was done. However, as people used magic, people clearly felt their life energies fade away rapidly.

After that, they sensed that they were dying, and they screamed inside.

Not a single one of them showed this outside. However, everyone, these countless people, were suffering from pain.

With emotionless faces, in silence, they were dying.

I tried not to, but I could not stop myself from shedding tears again.

Just why.

Why, you rotten son of a bitch.

Everyone at AoAeo island was kind and innocent.

To begin with, they came to the island because they heard that they could live happily with everyone without ever having to find fault with others.

These people would have been kind and innocent even without the Paramal.

This place was a heaven built by angels.

AoAeo island was a fully-completed utopia by itself.

It was a perfect place, the kind of place that made me wonder if such a place could exist in another place in this world or even the universe.

However, this place was...

“Fire Ball!”

This time, they poured out spheres of flame.

Several hundred thousand lumps of flame were thrown towards me.

Of course, the people who were near me had no choice but to get crucified in the flames.

Unlike myself, who had resistances to magic, the people who could not protect themselves from the flame were burned to death.

They didn't even struggle, even as they were being burnt to death.

They didn't flinch. They didn't even scream.

They just stared at me with empty faces. They died out as they prepared the next magic.

It seemed the next magic was ready. The mana in the area shook wildly.

Don't do it. Stop it now.

I used the Soul Steal.

I even used the Soul Cry.

“Stop!”

From mana running out of control, blood exploded out from the people's eyes, nose and mouth.

It seemed that some were unable to endure it. They lost consciousness and collapsed on the spot.

However, there were some who still managed to complete the

magic spell. The area around me was engulfed in flame once again.

In middle this chaos, through the gap between the flames, I saw the purple robe.

I vigorously kicked off the ground to charge forward.

I jumped up high and dashed toward the target.

The people had been just standing around like brainless scarecrows. However, they started to throw their bodies to grab ahold of me.

There was a woman who blocked the path in front of my eyes. I thought that...

I thought she looked familiar.

Although it was a brief meeting, I think I had once cheered and clinked glasses together.

As if she was a broken robot, she stretched her arms all the way up and tried to block my path.

I saw the girl's face, and then I saw that the target was running away behind her.

After that, in the end, I swung my sword.

Facing my sword that was struck down, the despair and sadness of her final moment was felt. While bearing her emotions, I charged forward.

Peoples' limbs and legs scattered across the air in fountains of blood.

The people who were gathered here were not warriors.

Physically, they were close to being regular people.

No, they were regular people.

Every time I swung the sword, which was wrapped across its long length with Aura Blade, three or four people were chopped away to pieces.

When I pushed forward with my shield, several dozens of people were thrown off.

Many of the people who fell that way died where they collapsed.

I tasted blood in my mouth.

It could be the blood of the people that had rained down on my entire body. It could be that I was bleeding inside my mouth. I don't know.

Either way, I'm sure it is not so different.

Like that, I pierced through the interference of the people and caught up to the target that was trying to run away.

The target rapidly turned around and tried to say something as he faced me. However, I wanted to end this situation as quickly as possible.

So, I swung the sword right away and cut him into two.

The target died like that.

By his death, one change occurred.

The people started to scream.

However, the clear message did not appear.

I confirmed that the hostilities of the screaming people were still aimed at me. I could understand the situation.

There wasn't just one target.

The people were controlled like puppets until a moment ago. Now, they became beasts who lost their minds. They charged into close-up physical struggles against me.

There were hands everywhere. They were trying to grab me from all directions. Feeling their fragile hands, I truly cursed at my current predicament.

That day was the 17<sup>th</sup> day since the beginning of the AoAeo

island's Grand Paramal Festival.

That day, I didn't drink any Paramal.

# Chapter 130 - Tutorial 18th Floor (6)

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[Round 18, Day 19, 16:20]

I checked the face of a man wearing purple robe over his head.

Again, the face was the same as the others.

I pondered about this.

I could not help but wonder.

Could I repeat this?

Could I see their faces again?

That was not the case.

I tightened my grip and snapped the man's neck.

After that, I confirmed the message.

[You cleared the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your wounds and abnormalities will be recovered.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for the best clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 7500 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. 2500 points were deducted.]

[An additional reward will be given based on your play record.]

[God of Death would like to give a part of the god's power as a gift. Would you like to accept?]

[You acquired Soul Collect Lv. Max.]

[All gods in White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[God of Slowness is watching you.]



[God of Adventure is rooting for you.]

[God of Duel is silent.]

[God of Death is overjoyed from watching you.]

[God of Life is watching you in a negative way.]

[God of Pain is smiling at you.]

[God of Goodwill is feeling sorry for you.]

It finally ended.

I didn't give a damn about the clear rewards. I just crouched down at the spot and took deep breaths.

Purple clothes on the upper body and black clothing on the lower body.

It turned out that there were more than just one such target who matched the description.

There were total of six.

They had emotionless faces and responses. They were too strange to be called humans. Considering that all of them had same body and face, I wondered if they were clones.

I was not certain.

However, I didn't want to dig around to learn about this in more detail than what I already knew.

I was not interested.

I checked the map that the target was looking at before he died.

It was the map of the AoAeo island.

The map had red lines marking all over the place.

I wondered what they could mean. Soon, I could figure out what the lines meant.

They were the whereabouts and movements of the targets.

During the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> day, the targets gather at one place.

The place of their gathering was the plaza I was at just now.

... It was a great piece information.

If I had known about this secret meeting place deep inside the island sooner, I could have waited until the 30<sup>th</sup> day and... kill all targets at once.

I cried from my regret and remorse.

I bit my lips. I bit my tongue. I tried to stop crying. However, I moaned along as they bled like my heart.

I could have avoided this tragedy, even if I had not found their secret meeting place.

It was more than possible.

Since I was planning on staying at this island for a long time, if I just forgot about clear condition and focused on living it up...

If I stopped searching after determining the location of the target...

Instead of provoking the target, if I killed him from a distance using a clean method...

If I didn't act so stupid and reveal myself to the target so carelessly...

The stupid and careless actions I had taken came together and brought about this tragedy.

It was my fault.

Now, I cannot even go back.

I already cleared the stage.

I glanced at the portal that appeared below my feet and then started to walk.

Outside the secret meeting place, there was still a bright sunshine. The light was shining down on me.

It was uncomfortable to walk.

I could not take one step without a corpse getting in my way. The ground was drenched with red blood. The ground was sticky.

Like that, in discomfort, I walked. I found a cup that had some Paramal left.

It was Paramal that someone didn't finish.

I was not surprised.

Paramal was found everywhere in this island. The drink was very common here after all.

I picked up the cup and tried drinking the Paramal that was still left in it.

It was sweet.

It was exactly like as if ice cream was molten.

That was all.

Now, it was no more or less than sweet water.

It did not make me feel better or... connect me to other people.

There weren't any people left for it to connect me to.

However, I could not stop drinking Paramal.

I walked down the street, and every time I saw a glass of Paramal, I drank it.

I hoped that its effect would be revived at the end of its sweetness.

That day, I really drank a lot of Paramal.

I drank so much of it that I threw up several times.

\*

[Round 18, Day 20, 10:00]

There weren't any Paramal left on the street.

I repeated drinking and throwing up. I drank it restlessly, so it was only obvious.

However, I continued to search for more Paramal.

I wanted to drink more of it.

What came to my mind was Hyang's café.

There was a large storage room under the café.

It was the storage room for Paramal.

I had a memory of drinking Paramal with Hyang at the storage room, so I went to find it right away.

As soon as I entered Hyang's café, it felt odd.

It just so happened that it was time for me to eat the breakfast at Hyang's café.

As a part of the morning routine that signaled the start of the day, I greeted the people inside the cafe, met Hyang and ate breakfast.

With not a soul inside, the café was quiet. I walked in and headed to the storage room.

I walked through the narrow and dark corridor that lead to the basement storage room. As I walked, I felt that it was familiar.

I already knew well, how Hyang died.

The storage room's door was locked.

I grabbed the lock and tightened my grip. I was able to tear it off with ease.

Inside the storage room were large wooden barrels. They were tightly packed together inside the room.

They all contained Paramal.

I brought out a glass and scooped up Paramal from a barrel.

Now, the beverage had no special effect. However, I think it is a little different for me.

When I drank it, I felt its intense sweetness, enough to make my tongue go numb. Every time I tasted its sweetness, I could remember the sensation I could feel until only recently, although the sensation lasted only while I was drinking it.

Also, I was just fooling myself into thinking so.

Still, I could not stop drinking Paramal.

That day, I spent the whole day drinking Paramal.

I threw up as much as I drank.

\*

[Round 18, Day 23, 17:30]

Unwelcome guests arrived at AoAeo island.

They were the ones who made Paramal and tried to control the people through it, probably.

As the targets did, they spread their voices throughout the entire island. The voices were commanding the people who drank Paramal.

Were they trying to find the survivors?

However, I was the only one who could respond to them.

As soon as I met them, I attacked them.

I was not all that interested in their goals or potential information.

As for the ship that they arrived in, I burned it.

After that, I returned to the basement of the café.

That day, I spent my time drinking Paramal and throwing up.

\*

[Round 18, Day 29, 07:30]

I had thought this once.

I will lighten up by the time I leave AoAeo island.

It was because I thought I won't be leaving until I felt that way.

I think it went as I planned.

I had spent the past few days drinking Paramal and throwing up while crying.

I didn't want to drink Paramal anymore.

I no longer felt regrets or remorse.

It was not that the emotions disappeared.

It was just that I had poured out so much emotion. Now, no emotion were left. No thoughts came either.

I just felt empty.

My head and heart...

After I cried for a long time, I felt numb. I felt empty. At the same time, I felt a little refreshed. That's how I felt.

No thoughts came to my head.

I didn't feel anger. I didn't feel sadness.

At this moment, I was emotionless.

I didn't know if this state would continue, but I thought that I will be all right for a while.

It was time for me to leave.

First, I got out of the storage room.

Through the portal, I could leave the stage. However, I wanted to check my status for a bit.

Slowly, I checked the sensations, starting from the tip of my fingers.

There weren't any problems.

As for my mind... I don't know.

I think it would be good to take good care of myself so I won't shake my mentality.

I opened the status window and checked my growth.

I leveled up a bit. Skills leveled up quite a bit as well.

If it was like the past, I would have been happy about them, since I gained things.

Although I didn't feel any emotion, I felt the chill going down my spine as I thought of that.

I felt goosebumps on my arm and cheeks.

It seemed I was not able to empty it all.

Well, how could I empty all of it.

I think it will continue to follow me around.

I checked the Soul Collect skill that I received as the reward for clearing the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor.

[Soul Collect (Lv. Max)]

Description: After pondering on this for a long time, the God of Death gifted the power to the challenger that the god had taken the most interest in lately.

Although careful, the God of Death is also impatient. The god is already regretting his decision.

As usual with all power skills, I could not figure out what this skill was for based on the description alone.

From the name, it seemed like it was a skill for collecting souls. However, I could not get a feel for how to use it.

I should ask Kiri Kiri.

Beyond the window, I looked down at the street.

At the moment, there were several hundred thousands of souls here in this island.

I thought about trying out the Soul Collect as a test. However, I decided not to.

I don't even know exactly what kind of effect it will have.

My wounds just stopped bleeding for a moment. I didn't want to poke at it for the sake of a fickle curiosity.

After finishing the thoughts, I got on the portal that was just a step away.

“Teleport.”

I closed my eyes for a moment and opened. I was moved to the green field.

“I'm sorrrrrying!”

As soon as I was moved to the field, Kiri Kiri screamed and jumped toward me.

She was throwing a tackle at me. I collided with her and fell back.

“What are you doing, Kiri Kiri.”

Kiri Kiri tightly held on to me and cried her eyes out.

“Hiiiiing. I didn't do my job.”

You didn't do your job?

Ah, is it because she didn't give advice about the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor?

Actually, that was because I rushed back to the waiting room.

To begin with, I had not been hearing much advices on how to clear stages lately. Also, after clearing the 17<sup>th</sup> Floor stage, I had many things I had to mind.

If I am to assign blame, then this is not Kiri Kiri's fault. It is my own.



“No. It is my fault. I should have stopped you from leaving and told you about the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor.”

It is really all right.

If it was a few days ago, then I may have resented her.

However, now, I didn't feel emotions like resentment or regrets.

“Kiri Kiri. Instead, I would like to ask you for explanation on the Soul Collect skill.”

“Hiiiiing. I got it.”

Kiri Kiri lifted her head and responded.

However, she did not release her arms which were tightly holding onto my body.

I also asked her to give me advice for the next floor.

Kiri Kiri said there won't be much danger at 19<sup>th</sup> Floor.

As a side note, she included explanations on how to treat the cold and how to take care of someone who had it.

I didn't have to worry about getting cold. So, this meant that I'll be meeting someone at the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor who has a cold.

This is slowly getting stuffy.

I got up and stretched.

I thought Kiri Kiri might unhand me if I got up. However, although I got up, Kiri Kiri was still hanging onto me.

She was like a koala.

“Can you please let go now?”

“Nooong.”

“I'll give you cake if you let go.”

“Okaying!”

Kiri Kiri detached herself from me immediately.

I bought her a piece of cake.

“Hooouuujaeee, aren’t you going to eat too?”

“I’m not going to eat. I don’t think I’ll be able to eat anything sweet for a while.”

Literally, I had been drinking Paramal until I puked.

So, I became sick of anything sweet.

“Hiiiiing... Please don’t kick yourself so much. It is not your fault. That was just a difficult trial.”

I’m sure she was trying to console me. Still, I did not agree with her.

Anyway, I am thankful for her. She is showing concern for me.

Still, I suppose I did get something from the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor.

I learned to be thankful to another in honest way.

“No. You had always been honest to your emotions and were not afraid to show them.”

She is complimenting me out of the blue.

“Usually, having other beings reading one’s mind is very scary and uncomfortable. However, you didn’t mind me or other gods for looking into your thoughts. That was because you were not afraid to show us your thoughts and were not embarrassed about them.”

I am not sure. I don’t think that’s why.

I have many embarrassing thoughts. I do wish that I could hide them as well.

Still, well, it does feel good to be praised.

“Hooouuujaeee, you are!”

Kiri Kiri suddenly shouted.

She then closed her eyes. She started to think deeply about

something.

She had been like that for a while. She suddenly opened her eyes widely, faced me and said, “Your fingers are beautiful.”

Kiri Kiri looked very proud as she said it. Meanwhile, I could not immediately understand what that was for.

I was able to understand her intent only after I thought about what I had been thinking earlier.

She was giving me compliments for my own sake.

That sure is an odd one. She spent almost three minutes to think hard about it, and that’s what she came up with? That my fingers are beautiful?

I wondered if I should take away the slice of cake. I gave it a serious thought.

“Ho.... Houuujaeee, you are!”

Kiri Kiri noticeably stumbled with words.

After that, she closed her eyes and thought hard.

I’m looking forward to her answer too.

I wonder what kind of compliment would she give me this time?

“Your name is fun!”

As I thought, I think I should take the cake.

\*

I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri and went back to the waiting room.

I had chatted away with her for a long time before I left, so I was feeling a little excited. Now, my mood was calming down again.

I sat at the bed in the waiting room and thought about things.

My emotion had become dull.

I wondered if this would become a big problem later.

For now, there was nothing bad about it.

At AoAeo island, I really had seen the bottom of the barrel.

I cried like a crazy person and did all sorts of unsightly things.

My current condition was far more preferable than a continuation of that.

It was more comfortable as well.

Maintaining agitated emotional state is very taxing mentally and physically.

However, this might become a problem later.

I feel anxious.

I checked my current mental state as if I was a third person.

At a glance, I look as if I obtained the enlightenment.

I had thrown away all desires that human beings possess. I have defeated my own emotions.

However, I knew well that I didn't obtain the enlightenment.

How should I explain this...

Right. I feel like I am currently in the state of anesthesia.

I had become mentally numb.

Just like how senses become numb from extreme pain, just like that.

I had pondered about this for a moment. It didn't look like there is anything that would cause problems.

This is not the first time.

After I just fell inside the Tutorial, I had been constantly experiencing terror from life-threatening elements. I had been seeing numbers which indicated the death of people.

Also, I had spent time in agony while blaming myself for not being able to save those people. As such days continued, before I

realized, my heart had become numb.

I had been treating myself without much care like an avatar in a video game.

These are not some distant memories.

They are the things that have happened ever since I entered the Tutorial and until now.

To make a rough guess... It is until just before I summoned Idy at the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor and stayed with her.

I actually have been thinking that I had become complacent and careless lately.

Killing and subduing the emotions and looking at situations objectively is helpful for survival and growth.

It is not a bad thing.

It was just that I have been too relaxed lately.

I organized my thoughts that way.

I finished agonizing over things. Afterwards, I was finally able to have a moment to spare to look around myself.

I looked around, but there wasn't much.

It's a waiting room, so it is just a waiting room. Well...

There was one thing that was different.

When I returned to the waiting room after the tournament was over, I was under the effects of extreme loneliness and solitude.

I was in pain. I was sad.

Now, I didn't feel that way.

As I thought, this is not a bad condition to be in.

However, my senses were still dampened.

I didn't sense any movements from my eyes.

It was obvious.

There was just myself in the waiting room that was moving.

Other than the sound of my breathing, I couldn't hear anything.

I held my breath for a moment. Now, I could only hear the sound of my heart beating.

Dugun.. Dugun...

The sound of the heart beat was very small. However, its presence felt as loud as thunder.

Following the rhythm of the heartbeat, I felt like the pressure inside the dark waiting room was rushing at me.

The waiting room was dark and empty. However, it felt like the place was full of something.

I felt like I was going to get buried under my dampened senses.

There were not many things that I could do to escape this.

I opened the inventory and brought out Transmutable Thousand Arms.

Slash... Slash...

In this dull waiting room, the sound that I hated hearing, only the horrible sound of flesh being cut echoed.

# Chapter 131 - Tutorial 60th Floor (11)

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I closed the library room's door and came down to the lower floor.

At the lower floor's living room, there were Yong Yong and the clone bastard. They were gathered at the table eating fruit pie.

Yong Yong had his mouth full of the pie and chewing. I picked him up and sat at the chair that he was sitting.

I had Yong Yong sit at my lap.

It seemed the fruit pie was delicious. Even as I was placing him on my lap, he only focused on chewing on the pie.

“Any progress?”

I nodded.

There was.

I was now certain that the method I had been trying so far does not stand any chance anymore.

The Tutorial's stage was no different than individual dimensional isolation barriers.

The biggest characteristic of the stages was that the passage was only one way past.

One could move on to the next floor through the portal that opened by the system. Other than this, no other direction of movement was possible.

The tournament and the day of the great harmony were exceptions. However, I am not yet able to interfere with those.

Lately, there had not been any events, so I was also lacking in examples.

So, the method I had been trying lately was breaking open a path between the 60th Floor's stage and other stages.

Even if I don't make a connecting pathway out of the Tutorial, if I could just break open a path to the 90th Floor or 99th Floor, I can clear the floors right away.

After I tried my idea, I failed.

“How bad is it?”

“It is impenetrable even if a god came to try breaking it.”

“... This is worse than I thought. Could it be a product of joint efforts by many gods?”

“It could also be the work of a god who specializes in dimensions.”

Anyway, with my current abilities, I think it would be difficult to break open a new pathway inside the stage.

Uuuuaaaaa.

The project I had been pushing for turned out to be a dead end. I feel like I'm losing strength and enthusiasm.

I tossed a gigantic jawbreaker candy inside my mouth.

“Daddy, I want one too.”

Yong Yong saw me eating the candy. He opened his mouth and said ‘ah~’.

I also put in a jawbreaker in his mouth.

Yong Yong rolled the candy around in his mouth. He then picked up the pie again.

He held the candy on the edge of his rear teeth and continued to chew on the pie with his front teeth.

If he swallows the pie and the candy goes with it, then the candy will get stuck in his neck.

Well, it probably won't matter.

“What's next?”



“Um... I’m not sure.”

I had not thought about what I would do if this idea failed.

Actually, I had always been thinking about other possibilities, but nothing useful came to my mind.

I was running out of ideas.

“I have no leads. I don’t have anything that could work as a medium either. In the end, it means I need a completely unique idea that I never thought of. I need creativity. Creativity.”

I mumbled on by myself like that, and the clone bastard sighed and turned his gaze to a book.

Yong Yong was energetically eating the candy and pie. I brushed his head once and opened the newspaper.

Yong Yong was sitting on my lap. So, I had the paper floating above my head so I could read it.

What caught my eyes was...

The biggest topic in the newspaper was about Lee Yeun-hye clearing the 17th Floor.

I already knew about this very well, so I have no need to read it in detail.

As for items on the auction, nothing is catching my eyes...

As for stories about what’s happening in the outside world...

[Kim Min-hyuk, the former second in command of the Order of Vigilance, is in a conflict with Korean Government?]

What’s this about?

The headline really caught my eyes. I hurriedly checked the details in the article.

According to the article, Kim Min-hyuk established a new clan and had been gathering Korean Awakened warriors who were scattered across the globe. Having realized Kim Min-hyuk’s work,

the Korean Government expressed their discomfort with his actions.

I sent a message to Park Jung-ah so I can learn a bit more about this article.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: That seems to be the case.]

[LHA, 60th Floor: Try explaining it further.]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: From what I've heard, the number of S rank and above Awakened warriors in the newly established clan exceed the number of such warriors who belong to the government. I'm sure the government feels uncomfortable about this. I heard Kim Min-hyuk is even planning on gathering up Awakened warriors who are foreign nationals.]

Korea has produced the most number of highest rated Awakened warriors. However, the Korean Government retained the least number of such warriors in comparison to all other nations.

I'm sure this is rubbing them the wrong way.

The Awakened warriors were no ordinary super humans.

They had financial power and connections. Not only that, each warrior was sometimes viewed as a symbol, a rallying point of the people.

Some became celebrities in the entertainment industry. Some became dealers who moved the prices of lands and houses.

The Awakened warriors defeated monsters and influenced a nation's defensive capability as well.

Their presence also directly affected the pride of a nation along with foreign affairs and even currency exchange rates.

The Awakened warriors were incredible strategic resources. Literally, they were beyond the norm.

The Korean government was facing the reality of not being able to keep their Awakened warriors from a foreign country's capital

power. Instead of forcing the warriors to stay, Korean Government chose to let them go overseas under a few conditions and maintaining their Korean nationality.

In that situation, the fact that the highest rated Awakened warriors who didn't even have Korean citizenship were gathering inside the country was definitely an unstable movement for the country.

I have never been outside, so I don't know the situation exactly, but...

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: In middle of all this, saying bad stuff to the government or getting tangled up with reassignments... Well, I think there are lot going on. During the last round, there was a message from the government.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: To us? What did it say?]

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: Well, you know. The message asked us to stop Kim Min-hyuk. I gave a rough response, saying how are we supposed to stop someone outside when we are inside the Tutorial.]

That was true.

We are trapped here. How are we supposed to stop Kim Min-hyuk?

Also, even if we were outside, we wouldn't be stopping Kim Min-hyuk.

To the outside, Park Jung-ah and I are known to be the leaders of the Order. However, practically speaking, Kim Min-hyuk was the one who led most of the Order's projects.

Park Jung-ah and I were closer to just being the faces of the Order for the purpose of public relations.

The conversation started with Kim Min-hyuk's story. However, it soon led to useless banter.

The pointless chatter between Park Jung-ah and I continued on and on until the clone bastard next to me expressedly directed his discomfort towards me.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How's the newbie doing? I heard that she made it past the 17th Floor.]

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: She is continuing well. It would be great if she could keep up the current pace and get up here. I wish she could hurry, but...]

Now, the topic had moved to Lee Yeon-hye. She became the most popular person in the Tutorial lately.

The 17th Floor was my biggest concern, and she managed to get past it. Now, she was sailing through smoothly.

Even at the 18th Floor, thanks to the information I gave her beforehand, she was able to clear it without facing any danger.

Ah, that makes me think about the 18th Floor again.

I glanced at the clone bastard next to me and stopped thinking about it.

Our mental connection was off. However, even with that, we could still vaguely detect each other's' thoughts.

I want to avoid the clone bastard finding about my thoughts regarding the 18th Floor.

The clone bastard was not someone who was completely different from me, although I couldn't say he was exactly the same as me either.

To be specific, it wasn't that the clone bastard and I shared everything together in identical ways. He was a collection of some parts of myself.

He was made based on the thoughts, experiences and memories I gained since entering the Tutorial.

He was not like myself who had memories of my life before the

life inside the Tutorial. All memories he had were from inside the Tutorial, and his entire life was what he has lived so far at the 60th Floor. To him, the memories of the 18th Floor is a critical trauma.

He still had not overcome the memories. It looked like he just had been forgetful of it.

[Park Jung-ah, 90th Floor: How much longer would it take for the newbie to get to the 60th Floor?]

I am not sure? I really don't know about that.

If I had the specs she had, I would be able to get here in a flash.

However, Lee Yeon-hye has been progressing so slowly.

Also, since the 20th Floor, I had been getting past the stages rather fast, so I don't have much information about them.

Of course, I have information I obtained through the manager. However, they are not as good as the information I obtained through actual experiences.

As for how long it would take for Lee Yeon-hye to get to the 60th Floor, I really am not sure.

[Lee Ho-jae, 60th Floor: I'm sure she will do well on her own. What is important is not the time it takes. It is not dying.]

She made it past the 17th Floor, but it was not like all obstacles that posed threats to her life were gone.

There are numerous dangerous stages left.

I chattered away with Park Jung-ah for a while again and then concluded the conversation.

Even after the conversation ended, I thought about Lee Yeon-hye for a while.

Since the 17th Floor, the number of messages from Lee Yeon-hye have decreased noticeably.

As for letters, they didn't come at all.

Lee Yeon-hye said she heard information about me from Kiri Kiri.

I'm sure this falls to the category of private information. I wonder how she heard it.

She mentioned gods, so I think she was given a proposal that was not related to me and heard about me in the process.

I can be certain about one thing. Kiri Kiri kept her promise with me.

However, apart from that issue, the information that Lee Yeon-hye heard from Kiri Kiri was dangerous.

She now knew that I had been trying all sorts of things to leave Tutorial. She also learned that I had been making small bits of progresses.

From Lee Yeon-hye's perspective, if I am to clear the 60th Floor by myself, then she will be stuck there by herself. It could not be helped that she would be sensitive about this.

She could feel disappointed in me. She could feel upset.

"Km. Km. Uuuuhuum. Uhm!"

I was organizing my thoughts, but the clone bastard faked a cough next to me.

What is he up to?

His lungs and breathing won't have any problem even if he hibernated in a chemical-infested, biologically dangerous and radioactive training room.

"Uuuuhuum! That.... Km! I have something to say..."

The intro was unnecessarily long.

"Km... that... How should I say this."

Watching him like this, I am reminded that the clone bastard and I are completely different entities.

He was based on my past, but is it because the personality's growth has been different since his birth?

He had completely different philosophies and personality.

"I also want a n... I want to have a name too!"

With the same face as mine, he was blushing and closing his eyes as he shouted that. Watching him do that overcame me with emotion inside somehow.

However, regardless of what I was feeling inside, the clone bastard's little wish was very understandable.

"Why a name all of the sudden?"

"I can't be called a clone forever. It is not like I'm an ordinary clone."

That's true.

To be precise, he was not a clone or mental formation.

He was closer to a new life form born from genetic engineering.

"It did not matter when I was just with you, but I don't want to be called uncle clone by Yong Yong forever."

It seemed he had been agonizing over this for some time.

Having heard his name, Yong Yong raised his head up. I looked at him.

Since Yong Yong was born, the clone had recognized the concept of another person. At the same time, he developed a desire to make a distinction of his own existence. I think that's how it can be explained.

Also, I think the novels he had been reading lately influenced him as well.

I guess I will really have to make a name for him.

"Which name do you like?"

It is not like he is a newborn baby. I think it would be best to give him the name he wants.

The problem was the clone bastard's answer...

[“Hooch Nedval.”](#)

What a sight to behold.

What nonsense is this?

“What! It's a great name.”

“In that case, let's go with Ho-chi. The Ho part is a tradition. Lee Ho-chi. That's a great name.”

Having heard my suggestion, the clone bastard's face turned red. Yong Yong started to laugh. It seemed Yong Yong found the sound of the name to be funny.

Yong Yong, is his name that funny?

It is similar to your daddy's name?

The clone bastard huffed and puffed for a moment. He then took off.

Looks like he is angry.

Still, Hooch Nedval was just not right.

Yong Yong was still smiling. I hugged him tightly.

“Yong Yong, it seems your uncle wants to have a name too. What kind of name should we give him?”

“Uncle's name?”

“Yes. It looks like your uncle doesn't know how to make one for himself. I think your daddy will have to help him.”

I feared that the clone might come up with a name like Frodo Baggins if we didn't make one for him.

Yong Yong's eyes suddenly sparkled. He grabbed my sleeve and said, “Daddy! In that case, I want to make a name for my uncle!”



Huh?

“Yong Yong, you will?”

“Yes! Yong Yong will!”

I think this idea is making me feel anxious in its own way.

I get the feeling that whatnot-etcetera the fourth or something like that will result from this.

Still, I think it will be better than leaving it to the clone bastard.

I wrapped it up that way and put my hand toward the fruit pie that was still left on the table.

When I almost finished the pie, I could feel the clone bastard’s movement.

His movement was not toward here. He was headed to the portal.

Soon, his presence disappeared near the portal.

I think this rascal must be really pissed.

All by himself, the clone bastard went to the 61th Floor stage.

Maybe he is thinking about asking the old man or the granny about names.

It probably won’t matter. Well...

It is not like he is a child.

\*

“Daddy, why isn’t uncle coming back?”

The clone bastard had not returned for three weeks.

[Hooch Nedval is one of the main characters of Dragon Raja, a Korean fantasy novel that was mentioned before. The clone had read the whole thing.]

# Chapter 132 - Tutorial 19th Floor (1)

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[Adorable...]

[Pardon?]

[I said adorable.]

[It... it so sudden to hear you say that about me...]

[No, not you.]

\*

[Round 19 will begin.]

[Round 19, Day 1, 00:00]

The message signaling the start of the new round appeared, and I finished getting ready to head out to the stage right away.

Park Jung-ah or Kim Min-hyuk and others would be busy minding the newbies who just entered the Tutorial at the start of the new round.

It was not like I had anything in particular to tell them, so I decided to go straight to clearing the stages.

Now, let's go.

I calmed my heart through the past few days. I feel refreshed too.

[God of Adventure is anxious.]

[God of Slowness is cheering for you.]

[God of Goodwill feels sorry for you.]

Seriously, I let it be known to them that I am annoyed with their messages, yet why are they still at it?

Since two days ago, they had been sending me messages like that in every few hours.

I stretch-yawned once and got on the portal.

With renewed attitude, let's go.

I went through the bonfire room and entered the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor stage. It was a dark forest with lush trees.

The forest was packed with tall trees. The above was covered in tree branches and leaves. Not a ray of sunshine came through.

The tall tree's branches were all above my height, so they didn't get in my way or block my view.

Because of the trees, the view was not very wide.

There were bits of fogs here and there, so the air was moist and cold.

Fortunately, the ground was solid enough.

It was not mushy mud. That alone was something to feel fortunate about.

Overall, the environment was not comfortable. Still, I was satisfied with breathing the clean air with the smell of grass.

[God of Godwill feels sorry for you.]

Ugh, really. I wish they just stopped it already.

I ignored the message from the god who cared too much. Instead, I turned my attention to something else around me.

What am I supposed to do in this stage?

Usually, I could figure out the theme of the stage before the message appeared to explain the stage's clear conditions.

However, I am not able to get a feel for the theme of the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor stage.

A lush forest.

If I have to point out anything out of the ordinary, there was a small animal that was hiding behind a tree and shivering.

What kind of animal is that? Why isn't it running or attacking?

On top of this, it is not even hiding all that well.

I can see its tail wagging. The tail is fully exposed.

Could it be that this is not a wild animal but a pet?

I thought about approaching it. However, the animal was shaking a lot. It appeared to be choking in fear, so I decided not to.

Instead, I spread mana and checked the appearance of the animal that was hiding behind the tree.

As I observed visually, the animal had brown fox tail.

Above the tail... A human?

Surprisingly, the one hiding behind the tree was a human.

Considering the ears and the tail, perhaps I should say a beastman.

I guess this one is similar to Kiri Kiri.

At first, I thought this one was an animal not just because of the tail, but also the animal-like low growl and thick animal-like smell.

I guess this one is a little different from Kiri Kiri?

Kiri Kiri introduced herself as a rabbit, not a human, but practically speaking, Kiri Kiri is closer to a human who happens to have bunny ears.

On the other hand, I think this one is closer to being an animal that looks like human.

There is the low growling cry. There is also the crunching pose too.

If it was not for the fact that this one was wearing a green raincoat, I might have still mistaken this one for a wild animal even after checking its body and face.

It was at that moment. The message appeared.

[The 19<sup>th</sup> Floor's trial will begin.]

Explanation: Mr. Guide, have you ever lost your way in middle of a dark forest? I hope you never have. Lately, there is a terrifying rumor going around about Graywood forest.

The rumor has it that there are ghosts who are trying to eat people's livers. The ghosts, with their ghastly cries, are roaming around the forest.

In middle of the forest, there is a child who needs help.

Guide the child to the outside of the forest.

[Clear condition]

1. Guide the child, who is wearing the raincoat, to the outside of the forest.
2. The child must survive.

That was quite a simple message.

I felt like the message's tone was a little different from other floors, but that was not a big problem.

It sounds like I just need to be that kid's temporary guardian.

I thought something was up when Kiri Kiri showed me how to take care of cold symptoms.

Ugh.

Without me realizing, I sighed.

I am no good at taking care of another.

I never tried it either.

Um... What should I do.

I should try it first and summon Idy if I feel like it won't work.

"Uururururu..."

Anyway, how am I supposed to take care of this one?

I think this one is afraid of me.

Actually, more importantly, that one appears to be afraid of me,

yet it has the audacity to growl at me?

That defeats the purpose of hiding, doesn't it?

I was trying not to contact the busy people, but I had no choice.

I need help.

[Lee Ho-jae, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor: Help!]

[Kim Min-hyuk, 30<sup>th</sup> Floor: Busy.]

You heartless bastard.

To start with, I suppose it would be better to ask Park Jung-ah instead of Kim Min-hyuk about this.

It requires a fine touch, so...

If anyone asked if Park Jung-ah was gentle and refined, then I would not know how to answer that. Anyway...

[Lee Ho-jae, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor: Do you have a bit of time?]

[Park Jung-ah, 45<sup>th</sup> Floor: Yes, of course. I have time for a quick chat.]

This is the first time to see Park Jung-ah saying she had time for a quick chat.

It looks like she must be very busy.

There was no need for a long introduction. I went straight to the point.

[Lee Ho-jae, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor: What should I do to calm an animal that's frightened?]

[Park Jung-ah, 45<sup>th</sup> Floor: I am not sure. Befriending an animal is usually accomplished with food, right?]

[Lee Ho-jae, 19<sup>th</sup> Floor: I got it. Thanks. I'll contact you again later.]

I closed the message window and opened the dimensional pocket from the inventory.

Which food should I tempt this one with? Which food would work well?

Considering the ears and the tail, I think this one is a beastman kind that is similar to foxes.

It means this one is probably a carnivore or omnivore.

Even a rabbit-human like Kiri Kiri is an omnivore, so I think it would be best to get both meat and vegetables.

First... I should make the bonfire of course.

This is following the cliché.

In martial warrior stories, when the main character runs into someone who had been suffering from starvation, this is right about the time when they had a bonfire going and roasting fishes together.

There's no need to bother with handling or preparing it. Also, while the fish gets roasted, the smell spreads too.

There's also the warmth from the bonfire, so the situation fits exactly to the cliché.

Also, this is one of the clichés that are very plausible.

I collected fallen leaves from nearby.

As soon as I got up, the one behind the tree flinched big, but the one didn't run away.

Among the leaves, which were mostly a little wet, I found ones that were relatively dry and rubbed them with the heat stone.

Soon, the leaves caught on fire.

There was no need for me to do bothersome things like having the tree branches get caught on fire and blowing at it to grow the fire.

I brought out charcoals from the inventory and tossed them around the heat stone.

The bonfire will be more or less complete as long as the charcoals catch on fire before the heat stone's power dies off.

I placed a fishing chair about a step away from the bonfire and sat down.

I totally feel like I'm out on camping.

I brought out ingredients from the dimensional pocket.

At a long kabab stick, I placed meat and vegetables in order.

They were already cleanly cut, so I could get the kabab ready without much work.

I made two kababs, placed them on fire and started to roast them.

I didn't have a platform to place the kababs, so I held them on my hand and roasted them.

After a bit of time, the roasted vegetables' sweet aroma and roasting meats' smell started to spread.

The smell was pretty good.

I placed one kabab on the ground diagonally by stabbing the ground with its handle portion so the food stayed above the ground.

I started eating the other kabab by holding it.

The meat was only lightly seasoned, so it was a bit fatty, but the inner meat was soft.

It was not stuffy to eat, and I liked that the most.

As I thought, the expensive meats were worth the price.

Spicy vegetables between meats compensated for fatty meat's taste.

I had not had much appetite lately, but I was still able to eat the



kabab and enjoy it more or less.

For a while, I had forgotten about the fact that the goal was to entice the one behind the tree with food. Instead, I focused on enjoying the meal. Still, I think I accomplished the goal anyway.

The one hiding behind the tree was drooling big time from the mouth. So...

Now, um... What should I do?

I moved my hand toward the other kabab that was stuck on the ground, and the rascal's eyes shook wildly.

I had my back turned toward the rascal, so this one had about half of the body out of the tree.

I'm sure this rascal is thinking I cannot see, but I was watching this one using my detection skill, not my eyes.

I think I'll need to do some acting?

"Um... Hm... What do I do? I still have food left, but I'm too full. Ah, it is such a waste, but looks like I'll have to leave it here."

Although I was the one who said the line, the line itself and my delivery were seriously lacking in commitment to the acting.

I think a kindergartener reading a fairytale book out loud would sound more natural than this.

As for the runt behind me who was drooling out a river and fiddling around, that one was completely out of the tree.

Although the rascal was still maintaining the distance.

Let's wait a bit longer.

While I waited, I brought out food ingredients from the dimensional pouch and laid them around the ground.

The runt's breathing had become even harder.

When about 30 minutes had passed since I started to wait, the distance between me and the kid had closed substantially.

Although slowly, the rascal slowly came closer to me and the bonfire.

The kid was approaching at a snail pace of one step per five minutes, but still, the rascal was coming closer.

Since the rascal came closer, I decided to use the mana to examine the kid's appearance in detail.

I was planning on examining the appearance visually, but I think it would take another 20 or 30 minutes before the kid gets to front of my eyes.

As I noticed earlier, the rascal had fox-like tail and ears. The kid was a beastman kind.

This one was wearing a large, dark-green raincoat. Under the hood were large sparkling eyes. The kid looked adorable.

The height was less than one meter. The kid was small.

Considering the face, and the height, this one really appeared to be a little child.

Still, since this kid was not human, I could not be certain of this.

No matter how long I waited, the rascal was refusing to come any closer beyond a certain distance.

The runt was just fidgeting and hesitating around. Like that, I waited for over an hour. I couldn't help myself but to just give up and get up.

"Ah, I think I'll have to go relieve myself. It would be great if someone ate the leftover kabab."

Leaving behind the horribly delivered line as if I was reading from a book, I left the scene for the kid.

I was hoping that the rascal would pick up or eat the kabab and other food ingredients.

If possible, I would have preferred to wait for the kid and

befriend this rascal. However, this one was unable to come closer despite drooling and shivering hands from the hunger. Looking at the kid, I could not wait anymore.

I stepped away from the bonfire and walked into the forest. Meanwhile, I used the detection skill to monitor the kid.

I felt sorry for the child.

The kid's eyes were sunken and dark below. There was drooling from the mouth, but the lips were completely dried up that they were cracked.

The kid's fingertips were full of numerous little wounds that they looked like the fingertips would be covered in white scars. As for the kid's arms and legs, they were skinny as bones.

Despite all that, the little one was still not able to pick up the barbeque kabab in front of the bonfire.

This runt sure was a scardy-cat.

\*

After about 20 minutes passed, I could detect that the kid was moving away from the bonfire.

It seemed this one finally finished the meal.

I started to move to go back to the bonfire.

When I returned to the bonfire, what I saw was unexpected.

It was a little surprising.

The meats and vegetables on the barbeque kabab were still there.

Actually, there were minor differences.

There were one less piece of meat and pimento each.

Still, the arrangement of the pieces was changed slightly, so it was not obvious from taking a glance at the kabab that their numbers had been reduced.

If I didn't count the pieces when I made the kabab, I would not have been able to notice this easily.

Moreover, it was not just the kabab that changed.

Next to the bonfire were two long tree branches that were plugged on to the ground, and the kabab was placed above the two tree branches.

Thanks to that, the kabab was warmed up.

It seemed the height was just right as well. Kabab didn't burn either.

Also, as for the food ingredients that I scattered on the ground, they were neatly arranged based on type and shape.

None of the ingredients were missing.

There were small rocks surrounding the bonfire to form a circle.

They were placed to prevent the spread of fire.

The fallen leaves around the bonfire were all moved away from the bonfire by a certain distance. On top of this, the dirt that got on the portable chair's legs were wiped clean.

Without realizing, I turned my head to look behind me.

The kid had the head peeking out of the tree, but the runt tumbled and hid behind the tree as soon as I looked.

I think this one is not a fox but the [Snail Bride](#)?

I could not help but to ponder about this.

Someone who is so weak and who had suffered starvation for so long only ate a piece of meat and another piece of vegetable before putting down the kabab. Is that possible?

On top of that, this kid paid back for the kindness?

[The story of Snail Bride is a Korean fairytale. A farmer found a large snail. This happens to be a snail who could transform into a girl. When farmer went to work, she transformed into a girl and

cooked meals for him in secret so he would have the food when he came back. Later, the farmer meets the girl and marries her. The governor of the village learns about the incredible beauty of the girl, so he tries to take her away by forcing the farmer into wagers. It turns out the girl is the Princess of Underwater Kingdom (Korean version of Atlantis), so with her father's help, who is the King of the Sea, the farmer triumphs in every wager, making the governor to give up. To be precise, that is the happy ending version. There are many different versions in dictionaries, and apparently most of them are tragedies where the girl is taken away by the governor or the farmer and the girl both dies.]

## Chapter 133 - Tutorial 19th Floor (2)

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The kid was hiding behind the tree with just the head peeking out. I checked on the little one once again.

I figured that this one was just a scaredy-cat, but it seems like the kid was also very kindhearted.

The child only ate two pieces from the kabab, the meat and the pimento, cleaned the area and even made a platform for the kabab.

What I could not understand was that the kid was still drooling. It seems the rascal is still very much hungry.

Also, it seemed the kid has starved for a long time. This one's body didn't appear to be in a good condition.

Is this possible?

After losing one's mind over hunger, people would do anything, even snatching food away from another.

How could such a hungry child just leave unguarded food behind, eat a few pieces so it wouldn't be noticeable, and then leave?

I'm certain that the kid spent more energy cleaning than the amount gained from eating the little bits that this one ate.

The wet leaves and small branches on the ground were all cleaned away from the bonfire.

Even sharp rocks on the ground were arranged so that the flattest surfaces faced upward. Uneven surfaces on the ground were filled in as well.

This rascal's behavior is way different from what I expected.

It was enough to make me panic.

I pondered about this for a moment before I opened my mouth again.

“Ah, I think I should go to sleep now. I wish someone would eat

the leftover food.”

With that brief line, I moved away from the bonfire.

After walking about 30 steps, I brought out a floormat, placed it on the ground and sat leaning on a tree.

Like that, I closed my eyes and stopped moving.

I did this because I was wondering if the little one might be more at ease to come eat the food if I stayed like this through the whole night.

Fortunately, as I hoped, the rascal slowly approached the bonfire, making little bits of progress every five minutes.

I calculated that it would take a little over an hour for the kid to get to the bonfire.

I hope the child will eat the kabob and the other foods.

I directed my thoughts away from this afterwards.

I was always short on time, and there were so much to think about.

The highest priority right now was the soul collect skill.

It was the skill that I obtained after clearing the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor.

The God of Death gifted me with the power skill while revealing that it came from the god. God of Death had never done that before.

Other skills from the God of Death that were gifted to me did not have indications specifying their origin in the God of Death. Instead, they merely said the skills were gifted by a god who does not wish to reveal the identity.

It seemed the God of Death was now really interested in me.

Anyway, I now have three skills gifted from the God of Death already.

Dead Summon, Soul Steal, and Soul Collect...

The Soul Cry is not a power skill, but it is likely to be related to the God of Death.

That means I received four skills from the God of Death.

I wonder if I might end up being the God of Death's apostle.

[God of Adventure is feeling anxious.]

[God of Slowness is snorting and making fun of someone.]

It seemed that even the God of Adventure was feeling uneasy.

Meanwhile, it seems the God of Slowness is feeling confident.

Well, the God of Adventure was always feeling anxious even when there was just the God of Slowness to compete against.

Still, I think I'll be choosing either the God of Slowness or the God of Adventure, not some other god.

Of the two, I'm leaning most towards to the God of Slowness.

In the past, I thought my characteristics were closest to those of the God of Adventure.

I became increasingly certain of this after meeting the monks at the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor.

The God of Slowness wanted the process of repetition to achieve results. Meanwhile, God of Adventure was all about having a goal and overcoming hardship and difficulty in the process. I thought the God of Adventure's characteristics were closer to me than anyone.

The monks valued growth and duels. As for me, I valued victory as the result.

However, lately, my position on the matter was slowly changing.

I'm definitely different from the monks. I want to win and get the rewards.



However, what I want isn't a large and final conclusion. I just want to win and continue to win.

I want to achieve victory after victory and grab the rewards from them.

I could understand myself more easily by thinking about my old days as professional gamer.

Even then, I only wanted to win.

My fellow players wanted to achieve victories to win the entire tournament and stand at the pinnacle. That was their goal. Meanwhile, I just wanted to win and win.

Also, I wanted to stay at the top indefinitely.

Instead of thinking of the victory as the result, if one thought of victory as the process, then my characteristics are very similar to God of Slowness.

This is probably why the monks thought my values were similar to their own.

[God of Slowness is looking at someone and smiling.]

[God of Adventure is yelling and running off from someone's room.]

Still, it was not like I was incompatible with the God of Adventure's characteristics.

Anyway, breaking through the difficulties and obtaining the victory and reward is in line with the God of Adventure's character.

In the past, I was uninterested in my comrades, people around me, and my enemies. Now, I have been very mindful of other people and sometimes tried hard to understand them.

I think maybe I am becoming more similar to God of Adventure's character.

[God of Adventure suddenly looks better.]

[God of Adventure grinned and went back to someone's room.]

[God of Slowness is telling someone to leave.]

The God of Adventure and the God of Slowness have some parts of their characteristics that are contradictory to each other, but I believe their values can co-exist.

I cannot be certain which god is best suited for me yet.

Let's get back to Soul Collect skill.

[Soul Collect (Lv. Max)]

Description: After pondering on this for a long time, the God of Death gifted the power to the challenger the god had taken the most interest in lately.

Although careful, the God of Death is also impatient. The god is already regretting his decision.

When activated, the neutralized beings' souls will be collected. You can use them as your subordinates.

The collected souls will last for a month.

The collected soul's abilities will be proportional to the caster's abilities and their compatibility with the soul in addition to the soul's original abilities before death.

When activated, the godly power of the God of Death is used, so the skill does not require any power from the caster, such as mana, mental focus or holy power.

Thanks to Kiri Kiri's help, there were more descriptions now.

From the description, it appeared to be more of a soul enslavement skill than a soul collection skill.

Before I said goodbye to Kiri Kiri yesterday, she handed me a small note. I opened it and looked what it said.

Surprisingly, the note contained writing in Korean, although the

letters were not written very well.

I didn't know Kiri Kiri could write Korean too.

The note was simple.

[How to use Soul Collect!]

1. Defeat the enemy.
2. As the first part of the Soul Collect, collect the soul (it might be better if you used the Soul Steal at the same time).
3. As the second part of the Soul Collect, summon the soul.

PS. Make sure to buy me a cake next time.

Now that I read it, I realized the note was no different from the description on the skill.

It only had one additional tip about using simultaneously using Soul Steal.

The note is not all that useful.

Maybe Kiri Kiri was still feeling sorry about the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor so she decided to give me a small service.

Or, maybe she wanted to just tell me to buy her a cake.

Thinking like that, I put the note away into the inventory.

The Soul Collect skill makes me think about Pokémon. I cannot help it.

I thought it probably will be similar if I actually used it.

Spirit Monster, Go!

Like that.

Now that I said it, this feels like one of those run-of-the-mill mobile games.

I should try it out when I get the chance.

While I was thinking about all sorts of things, a wet leaf fell on my face.

The leaf was wet as drops of dew collected on it. The water was flowing down my face.

I was about to raise my hand to get rid of the leaf, but I noticed a change in the little fox child who had been hesitating around near the bonfire. The kid made a move.

I was concerned about the little one being frightened, so I didn't move. Instead, I waited.

The kid was only two steps away from the bonfire. The rascal glanced at the bonfire and then looked at where I was sitting. The kid kept looking back and forth.

That's right. I'll be sitting right here quietly, so please eat.

Suddenly, the kid brought the two hands together to the chest and made tight fists.

The hands were smaller than small pebbles.

The kid's behavior is cute to watch.

It seemed the little one finally decided to eat the kabob.

The fox child nodded vigorously and stepped forward.

It looks like this one is finally going to eat.

I wasted two hours already while trying to get that kid to eat.

If this is not the triumph of human patience, I don't know what...  
Huh?

The fox child ignored the kabab right in front of the nose. Instead, suddenly, the kid started to run toward me.

What? Hey, hey! Why are you coming this way!

I protested inside. Regardless, the fox child scurried toward me.

This is totally unexpected.

First, I awakened my focus and circulated mana through my body.

I thought it felt odd to assume a combat stance when a little child like this one was approaching me, but this place was Hell Difficulty.

I had to be prepared.

The fox child ran all the way to the front of me before stopping about two steps away from me.

It seemed the dash exhausted the little one. The fox child took a moment to calm his breathing. Afterwards, the kid walked to the front of me.

The fox child stood on the toes, and...

The little one lightly picked up the leaf from my face.

After that, the kid wiped off the dirt and water from my face using his hand.

As if the kid thought the work was done, the little one turned around and quickly ran off.

Dumbfounded, I opened my eyes and vacantly stared at the kid's back.

With gigantic dark-green raincoat, the kid was diligently running into the distance.

That rascal just came to clean the leaf from my face?

[God of Goodwill is happy to see someone's act.]

I think this is my first time seeing the God of Goodwill expressing something other than sorrow for someone.

The fox child went back to the tree that the kid had been hiding behind before.

The distance between the child and the bonfire had increased back to where he was one hour ago.

... Huh... Oh my... What an adorable little one.

\*

In the end, the rascal didn't approach the bonfire until morning the next day.

Throughout the night, the leaves fell on my face several times, and the fox child ran to me to clean them off every time.

I was surprised at first, but after that, I was able to accept it while smiling inside.

With short legs, the kid scurried toward me. Watching the kid do that made me feel happy every time.

It would have been better if the child picked up a few pieces of food and ate them while doing all that.

I scratched my head as I opened my eyes.

The dark forest had become a little brighter.

I checked the fox child's location again.

The kid was still hiding behind the large tree trunk, which was about ten steps away from the bonfire. Also, it would take about one hour for the kid to get there.

I confirmed that the kid was asleep. I got up and quietly approached the kid.

The raincoat was as big as the kid. I looked at the kid here and there.

His condition is worse than I thought.

Since the sunrise, the rascal had been crouching down behind the tree trunk. So, I didn't know how ill the kid was.

The fox child was sweating all over. His face was burning red.

His forehead was hot as fire as well.

The child was a scaredy-cat, yet this one was unable to wake up despite me being right here and touching the forehead.

As I thought, maybe I should have fed the kid something even if I had to catch the kid.

I regretted it a little.

I realized that I had developed a slight distaste for doing things that others might not like or hate.

It was not a good sign.

Anyway, it looked like I didn't need to worry about the kid waking up as much as before. So, that was a good thing.

As it said in the manual that Kiri Kiri showed me, I brought out the sleeping bag and tent and set them up. I laid heat stones around to raise the ambient temperature.

First, I had the rascal lay down inside the tent and poured in warm water into the mouth.

I was concerned about water going down the wrong pipe. Fortunately, that didn't happen.

Next, I had the kid drink a few sips of a vitality recovery potion.

After the potion went in, the breathing and the facial color improved significantly.

Unfortunately, I didn't have a potion that cured the cold itself.

I had removed the large raincoat that the kid was wearing.

The kid was a boy.

Under the raincoat, he was wearing a rag-like fabric.

I felt sorry to call it clothing. The clothe was torn and worn out. One side of the shoulders was torn, completely exposing that side's shoulder.

I wrapped my finger with mana to cut the clothing in order to undress the kid.

It was not awkward.

The kid was younger than my nephew.

Also, the kid was a boy.

Like that, I removed all of his clothes and wiped his body with a towel soaked in warm water. After that, I used a dry, soft towel to wipe off all water and put on a t-shirt and pajama pants on him.

It was fine to have him wear a large t-shirt. However, the pants were just too big.

When I pulled the pants up, it reached the kid's shoulder.

Well, it won't matter.

I put on another shirt that was thicker and had him lay on the sleeping bag.

With warm water towel, I wiped off the sweat from his face and neck before getting out of the tent.

It should be fine if I wiped off his sweat every few minutes.

I need to make food that this fox child can eat.

\*

Although foxes can eat anything, I heard that they like fruits the best.

I think I saw that from Animal Farm.

A warm tomato egg soup with all sorts of vegetables, a few fruits, some eggs and a soup with ground meat should be enough.

The bonfire was still burning brightly. I brought out kitchenware in front of it.

I handled the vegetables and meat while waiting for the water inside the pot to boil.

When I saw the theme for the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor for the first time, I thought it was such a bothersome stage.

It was a lot of work to look after myself as it was. Now, I had to be a guardian for another. There was no way I could be happy about that.



However, now...

While I was diligently working with the knife, I went over the treatments for fever, stuffy nose and throat, and cough. Also, I considered other complications that young children get from cold.

I didn't know anything for certainty about these.

I posted a note on the community and looked for challengers who knew a lot about children and cold.

Fortunately, there were a few challengers who had experience in raising children.

It had been months since I chatted with people in the community the last time.

I felt very sorry for the child who was struggling next to me due to the illness. Still, looking after the kid and chatting with the people over the community was not bad.

## Chapter 134 - Tutorial 19th Floor (3)

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The fox child was sleeping inside the sleeping bag inside the tent. It wasn't until the lunch time that the kid finally woke up.

I was changing the wet towel on top of his forehead at the moment, and the kid opened his eyes. We stared at each other.

The rascal screamed and then burrowed into the sleeping bag to hide.

I opened the side opening of the sleeping bag to look inside. I could see that he curled up his body and was shaking.

It hurts to see this.

There's no need for you to be so scared of me?

His face was buried to the other side of the side opening. He had his hands gathered up to cover his eyes.

What are you doing?

Just because you cannot see me does not mean I cannot see you.

I waited for a while, and the kid mumbled something quietly.

"Going to be angry at me..."

... Why would I be mad at you?

"Might beat me..."

Um, that really hurts to hear it.

Like that, the fox child muttered on for a long while inside the sleeping bag.

As I listened to the kid for a few minutes, my impression of his words changed. Now, I felt uneasy instead of being disappointed.

What he was muttering about was not directed at me.

He was reminding himself.

He was saying that he must not trust others because that's

dangerous.

I watched him for a long time yesterday. He was a gentle scaredy-cat.

He was fundamentally kind and generous.

Considering his personality and the numerous scars on his body, it seems he was abused by someone in the past.

Above the sleeping bag, I placed my hand on top of the kid.

“Do not worry. I won’t hit you. I won’t hurt you either.”

After a moment of silence, another mutter could be heard.

“Lies...”

“I am not lying.”

I wish I could say something to allow him to trust me, but that was impossible with my abilities when it came to conversations.

I felt awkward. So, I went outside the tent. I waited there.

I should just cover the soup up so it will be warm.

Maybe he will relax a little once he smells the food.

After about 30 minutes, I could see the kid peek his head out of the tent.

He was still shivering, but he didn’t look like he was choking on fear now.

He was sniffing and drooling.

When he was starving this badly...

I said to the kid,

“Hey. I left some clothes for you. They are brand new and also warmer. So, get changed before coming out.”

He changed to the clothes I left for him. The shirt and the pants were all too big for him, but it could not be helped.

“Come over here.”

The kid hesitated for a moment, and then slowly, very sloooooowly, the kid approached me.

He was afraid as always, but he listened pretty well.

I told him that the food was ready so he should sit down and eat.

However, the kid still didn't completely lower his guard.

“I must not eat it. It might be poisoned...”

“There isn't any poison in it, you rascal.”

I flinched inside, so I raised my voice a little.

That did piss me off.

Does he have any idea how hard I worked to make these?

Probably because of the frustration expressed in my voice, the little one panicked.

His large eyes were starting to fill with tears.

This.... Did I do wrong? Am I the one who did wrong?

Damn it all.

I picked up the dish that had the soup and ate a big spoonful's worth.

“Here, see? There is no poison. Come here. You should eat some.”

I picked up another spoon full and brought it toward the kid's mouth.

Uuuuuunnng

The kid shook his head and stepped back.

What was that for?

I extended my hand out, grabbed the back of the kid's clothes and had him sit in front of me.

He was struggling, but I had him sit there and picked up the soup again.

Like that, I brought the spoon toward him. Still, the rascal didn't open his mouth.

“Come on. Say, ah....”

He soon said ah... and opened his mouth.

Once he ate one spoon worth of soup, he started to eat well.

It seemed that the kid who refused to eat the soup had left the scene without a trace. Now, he was even saying that it was delicious as I spoonfed the soup to him.

The change in his attitude was quicker than I expected.

This reminds me of feeding my nephew when he was little.

I fed him soup. As for snacks afterwards, I cut the fruits, handed them to him and asked, “Would you like to eat more?”

The kid shook his head left and right.

Fortunately, he didn't look like he was afraid of me anymore.

The look on his face was a lot more relaxed now.

I checked his forehead. He still had some traces of a fever.

“Go back to the tent and get some more sleep. I'll go clean these.”

I collected the kitchenware and started to wash dishes.

The rascal didn't go back inside the tent like I asked.

It was not that he was trying to run. He just sat there and quietly watched me.

I thought about forcing him to go sleep, but I decided to let him be.

As he sat and watched, he started to doze off.

I carried him in my arms and laid him down in the sleeping bag.

I wiped off the sweat from his face again and got out of the tent.

I noticed the scars on his body again. They bothered me again.

Starting with his arms and legs, there were scars on his neck as well, and they seemed to be going across his body.

They were not from claws of animals.

Wounds from knives or whips... Burns from hot metals...

The child appeared to be five to eight years old in terms of human age. What could have happened to the kid that led to such scars?

He was very distrusting of me in the beginning. Just now, he was eating soups that I spoonfed him. Last night, he came to clean up the leaves on my face and cleaned the area around the bonfire. All these behaviors were bizarre.

If an innocent child who used to be trusting of others was lied to and was tortured by someone, then that would lead to defense mechanism like this, right?

My inside was in commotion in various ways.

I finished the dishes and sat in front of the bonfire.

The goal of the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor was leading this child outside of the forest safely.

He seemed to be still a little afraid of me, but he wasn't trying to run from me.

When I placed him on the sleeping bag, he slept. When I fed him, he ate the food.

I don't think it would be so hard to have him tag along.

Still, I think it would be best to have him fully rest for the day.

It should be fine if we headed out tomorrow.

The problem was if the kid knew a way out of this forest.

If he didn't know, then all I could do was walk in one direction until the forest ended.

I tossed in more tree branches at the bonfire and thought about things. However, I could feel the presence of many around me.

Kuuuuuu...

Kyaaaaa...

Kiiiiiaaaa...

There were things that appeared while making those sounds. They were some sort of spirits.

To explain it more easily, they were ghosts.

There were three of them.

It had been a while since I saw spirits appearing as my enemies.

I think I saw them once at around 10<sup>th</sup> Floor. I was able to deal damage to them using swords wrapped in mana, so they were not a big threat.

The 10<sup>th</sup> Floor stage was the kind that tried to stimulate fear in the challenger in various ways. However, the stage was not all that scary.

These ghosts were not all that scary either.

The ghosts looked white and translucent in human forms. They had blood and intestines here and there. Their eyes were white; they had no iris.

Their hands were twisted in a gruesome manner. Their mouths were wide open with red tongues and pitch-black darkness to the beyond.

They were quite a sight to watch, but they were weak.

I formed a long spear with the Transmutable Thousand Arms and poked at the spirits to attack them.

The spirits screamed as if they were on their dying breaths. They scattered.

Although they were not dangerous, it took a while to get rid of them.

I poured in a bit more mana into the spear and formed Aura Blade at the tip.

I tried stabbing the spirit with it.

Kiiiiaaaaaac!

The spirit didn't moan this time. It screamed loudly and disappeared.

Um... I'm being reminded again, but Aura Blade is quite a cheat.

It allowed me to pour in my will to the mana and focus the mana into wrap it on weapons or body.

It was a simple technique, but its effect was as different as the sky and the ground in contrast to simply pouring in a large amount of mana.

The Knight who taught me the skill at the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor was surprised about the Aura Blade, and he had a good reason for his reaction.

Anyway, with this, I was able to quickly destroy a spirit.

There were two more left, but I didn't feel they were a threat.

While at it, I decided to test a new skill.

[Soul Collect]

[There wasn't any soul you collect.]

Oh? What's this?

I tried the skill, and a message came up.

Although I failed to use the skill, a message could be seen as well.

This is good. This will make it easier for me to get used to the



skill.

This time, I pierced a spirit with the spear wrapped in Aura Blade at its tip and used the Soul Collect at the same time.

[Soul Collect]

[There wasn't any soul you could collect.]

This doesn't work either.

It would be nice if the message also explained why things didn't work.

I swung my spear toward the last spirit.

This time, after the spirit was struck by the Aura Blade, I used the Soul Collect at the moment when the spirit was becoming faint.

[Soul Collect]

[You collected the soul.]

[Collected soul count: 1]

I succeeded this time.

It looks like I'll have to use the skill right after I kill it.

Since then, the spirits came by in groups every few hours.

Their numbers grew each time, but it made no difference.

The combat against the spirits were not fun, but collecting the souls were fun.

Occasionally, I tried out controlling the spirits I gathered.

However, I could not figure out how to control the souls.

The skill's description really did say that I could use them as my servants.

Kiri Kiri's memo said so as well.

I should keep trying whenever I have the time. If it does not work, then I should ask for advice from Kiri Kiri again.

\*

[Collected soul count: 17]

Like that, I defeated the spirits and collected the souls. I had been pondering about how to control the souls I collected. Before I realized, it was night already.

I thought about going into the tent, but I decided to sit in front of the bonfire and spend some time there.

The spirits came to attack in irregular intervals, so it would be best to stay outside.

It looks like I won't be able to sleep from now on.

Well, I don't sleep well outside the stage anyway, but...

I tossed a few more branches into the fire and closed my eyes.

Although I was not going to sleep, it was still a good idea to rest my eyes by closing them.

A scaredy-cat kid was sleeping near me, so it was not like I could stink up the place with the smell of blood by harming myself for training. So, I just closed my eyes and rested.

I was resting like that, and I detected small movements inside the tent.

The fox child peeked his head out of the tent and stared at me. He then came out of the tent.

He walked away somewhere.

Is he running away?

Using detection and tracking skills, I could find him quickly even if he went very far. Still, it was not going to be a good idea to wonder off like that.

I opened my eyes and tried to get up. However, I saw that the kid was standing nearby. So, I closed my eyes again.

It looked like he needed to relieve himself.

He crunched down nearby and spent about ten minutes like that. He is just a little kid, but he already has constipation problems? It looked like he was done with the business. He got up and walked toward me.

He was walking in short, fast steps, which was unique to him. I felt that he came all the way in front of me. I could not help but to feel nervous.

... Hey, after you pooped, did you wash your hands?

I seriously thought about if I should open my eyes or if I should keep my eyes closed and pretend to be asleep.

The kid fiddled with his hands for a few seconds. He then placed something on top of my head and went back to the tent.

I confirmed that he crawled into the sleeping bag and then opened my eyes.

I carefully picked up the thing above my head and checked what it was.

It was a ring made of white wild flowers weaved together.

Seriously...My heart was touched.

He didn't come out to relieve himself in the morning. He wanted to make me a gift.

I smiled and tried putting the ring on my finger.

It was a fragile ring. It could be squashed easily. However, it warmed my heart.

\*

The next morning, I became closer to the fox child.

Perhaps it was because of the food I made for him and the flower ring on my finger. The rascal was no longer weary of me. He stood around me when I prepared the meal.

“See, there was no poison this time either, right?”

I asked him after finishing the breakfast.

The kid nodded.

It was a joke, but he didn't even smile.

“Did it taste good?”

“It was delicious...”

He still blurred the end of his sentences like that.

Could it be that he still feels anxious?

“Can I ask you one thing?”

That was out of the blue.

“Of course. It's all right. What are you curious about?”

“C... Can I say thank you...”

I could not understand right away.

Oh my... Is he asking me if he could thank me? That's ridiculous.

I nodded.

“Thank you...”

“You are welcome.”

I stroke the back of his head and responded.

Now that I think about it, I didn't hear his name yet.

I asked what his name was.

“Myong Myong.”

“Myong Myong?”

“Myong Myong is my name...”

That's a surprising naming sense.

Is it a type that's similar to Kiri Kiri's name?

He is a beastman like her, so perhaps that's why.

It seems that beastman have the tradition of coming up with unique names.

"That's an adorable name."

I could not think of any other praise.

It seemed Myong Myong didn't like that. Perhaps he read the look on my face. He pouted and said, "My name means Salvation..."

I merely thought his name was unique. However, he said his name contained the meaning of 'Salvation.' I fell to silence for a moment.

Are you serious?

"Really?"

"Yes..."

This means... Maybe Kiri Kiri's name has a brilliant or magnificent meaning behind how it sounds.

I should ask her later.

"My name is Ho-jae. Lee Ho-jae."

"Ho... Hooouuuujaaeee?"

Why do beastmen pronounce my name this way?

"Yes, Lee Ho-jae."

"... T... That's a good name. Puhup... A good... Huup. Name...."

For the first time, I saw smile on Myong Myong's face.

Also, there were tears.

He covered his mouth with his two hands and tried very hard to stop himself from laughing. However, the laughter kept on leaking through his mouth.

Later on, to stop himself from laughing at all cost, he pinched his

leg. He was in tears. I could not believe this.

Is it that funny? My name is that funny?

Damn it all.

## Chapter 135 - Tutorial 19th Floor (4)

---

With his mouth covered by his hands, Myong Myong was trying very hard to hide his laughter.

His face was turning red. It seems he was having very hard time holding his laughter.

“Is my name that funny?”

I was just curious as to why he thought my name was funny.

However, it seems that Myong Myong didn't take it that way.

It seems he thought I must be angry. He visibly flinched.

He raised his hands to cover his eyes. He lowered his body and crunched down on the ground.

“I... I'm sorry...”

... This is complicating my heart.

Myong Myong curled up his body in a ball. He was lightly trembling.

Is he trembling because he is afraid of me possibly being mad at him or is he still desperately trying to hold down the laughter and quivering in the process?

I think it is both.

He finally calmed down after about ten minutes later.

I had him sit in front of the bonfire and asked him again.

Earlier, he said his name had the meaning of “salvation”.

“Myong Myong, is there a word in your language that sounds similar to my name?”

I tried to be as kind and calm as possible as I asked.

However, it didn't work.

As soon as Myong Myong heard what I said, he covered his face

and suddenly got up.

Like that, he turned around and scurried away. He hid behind the tree and started to laugh while trying to suppress the sound. Looking at him, I sighed.

It seems the word Ho-jae in his language is no ordinary word.

I don't think I'll be able to hear from him about what it could mean.

I should ask again later when I get the chance.

I got up and went to Myong Myong who was crunching behind the tree.

"I... I'm sorry..."

Myong Myong was frightened. He apologized.

I looked at his round, large, sparkly eyes and his drooped ears. I felt the urge to tell him not to be afraid and then hug him.

However, instead of giving into my urge to hug the kid, my brain was rolling in a cold and logical manner.

I should use the opportunity that I could use.

I strained my eyes and crumpled my looks. I said,

"Since you did wrong, you should pay the price."

"I'm sorry. I was bad. Please forgive me..."

Myong Myong repeatedly apologized. There was a tear flowing down from his eye. At that moment, I felt like a piece of human garbage.

No, I am indeed a piece of trash.

"Um... If you grant me one wish, then I'll forgive you."

"I'll grant you any wish, so do not be angry with me..."

I am a piece of trash. I am a piece of trash.

Self-hatred was surging up from inside. I suppressed it and said,



“Myong Myong, by any chance, do you know a way out of this forest?”

“Yes.”

Myong Myong nodded.

“I actually lost my way in the forest. If you were on your way to leave the forest, I was wondering if you could take me there too.”

Myong Myong had a crying face, but finally, the light returned on his face.

“Yes. I’ll help you.”

With this, I’ll be able to lead him to the outside of the forest.

The fox child would have panicked if some random person showed up and told the kid that he must take the kid to the outside.

He might have become even more wary of me, suspicious that I might be trying to kidnap him.

Becoming a tag-along guy like this while asking him to lead the way is far less suspicious.

It seems Myong Myong was feeling good now. He hid his mouth behind his hands and smiled like a shy child.

“What’s so great?”

“I’m glad that there’s something I can do to help you.”

He is seriously selfless and kindhearted.

“I’ll be... uncle’s...?”

Did you just call me uncle, as in like an old man?

That’s too much.

“Call me Ho.”

If I asked him to call me Ho-jae, I’m certain that he won’t be able to stop laughing.

“I’ll lead the way for you, Ho.”

Looking at Myong Myong who was smiling in joy, I also smiled.

\*

[Round 19, Day 3, 08:15]

It’s been three days since I met Myong Myong.

I judged that Myong Myong’s health had improved significantly. So, I put away the tent.

While I was putting away the tent, Myong Myong decided to prepare the meal.

For breakfast, Myong Myong prepared meat stew, simple sandwiches and warmed milk.

The ingredients all came from the dimensional bag, but the preparation was done by Myong Myong alone.

After I put the tent away, I watched Myong Myong walk around with his short legs while wearing the t-shirt that came all down the way to his ankle. He was preparing the meal.

Watching him made me feel hearty and delightful.

With such skinny hands, he picked up the ladle and tasted the stew. Watching him, I thought about taking a picture of this moment and have it with me at all times.

Like that, I quietly watched Myong Myong work.

It was not that I was feeling lazy and trying to get the kid to do all the work.

Myong Myong wanted to handle all of the cooking.

According to Myong Myong, his tribe had been very skilled in housework for generations.

His tribe members innately liked taking care of others and helping others. So, they usually took on the caring professions such as cooks, gardeners, cleaners, maids or butlers.

I had been wondering why this frightened child who was unable to come out from behind the tree was also strangely selfless. It seemed that his selflessness was a special characteristic of his tribe.

Also, he said his tribe members do not like having someone joining in at the task.

Their labors were usually helping others. So, having someone joining in at the task is taken as themselves not being as helpful.

So, I didn't help him in the breakfast preparation. Instead, I watched him do the work.

As I watched Myong Myong, I remembered the scars on his body. Just who, what kind of twisted, cruel mind...

On such a kind and frail child, who could anyone leave such scars?

If I ever ran into the one responsible for his wounds, I'll definitely destroy this bastard. I firmed my resolve on my matter.

The meal was prepared. Myong Myong not only brought the utensils in front of me, but he also brought the cup, poured milk in it and even brought the chair for me to sit.

The array of dishes and foods were as diversified as if I was sitting at a restaurant table.

It looked like I'll never have to touch water for housework if I lived with Myong Myong.

Myong Myong was that detailed and considerate.

As if these were not enough, when I sat down, Myong Myong picked up the spoon full of stew, blew it to cool it a little and brought it toward my mouth.

"Say, ah..."

You didn't need to go this far, you rascal.

I stopped Myong Myong who was trying to spoon-feed me the

meal. I picked up the utensils.

The dishes he prepared were all delicious.

To be honest, they were even more delicious than the foods that Idy made.

Also, Myong Myong was more adorable than Idy.

[Day 3, 09:00]

With his tiny, bracken-like fingers, he neatly organized the dishes he cleaned and brought them to me. I said to Myong Myong, “Well done, Myong Myong. You are really good at this.”

Just like earlier when I told him that the foods were delicious, Myong Myong covered his mouth and laughed.

It looked like he was trying to pretend that this was nothing, but his eyes were like crescent moons. He could not hide the smile in his eyes.

I put the dishes away and waited for Myong Myong to put on the washed raincoat.

“Now, shall we get going?”

After confirming that Myong Myong was ready, I asked if he was ready to head out.

“Yes! I’ll led the way for you to get out of the forest, Ho.”

Myong Myong responded energetically and held one of my fingers.

After that, he started to march forward with grit.

Due to the height difference between me and Myong Myong, he had to raise his arm all the way up to hold my finger.

At this rate, this will eventually exhaust Myong Myong and myself.

So, I asked to walk without holding the hands. However, Myong Myong looked noticeably sadder.

Having noticed this, I changed my mind and asked to hold hands again.

Again, Myong Myong started to walk with brightened look on his face.

It was very uncomfortable to walk at a pace that matched Myong Myong's short steps.

However, I could get used to it quickly when I decided to think of this as training.

However, I didn't like that I could not have Myong Myong within my field of view easily.

He was walking besides my legs. Even when I looked down toward him, all I could see were the top of his head and his fox ears.

Actually, they are adorable on their own.

“Watch out!”

I was watching Myong Myong perking up his ears, and I almost tripped over a tree root and fell.

\*

The heaven always gives opportunities to those who wait.

With his eyes closed, Myong Myong was held in my arm. Looking at him, I thought that.

It's already been two hours since I followed Myong Myong's short steps.

Myong Myong was slowly getting exhausted. As for me, I slightly displeased with the slow pace caused by having have to match his short steps.

So, I tried to hold him in my arms or give him a piggy back ride. However, he refused, saying that he could walk on his own two feet.

It seemed he was thinking that his task was leading me to the outside of the forest and he wanted to do it without getting any help.

It was more of an insistence on a task he was given rather than being a stubborn child.

At that moment, a pack of wolves appeared in front of us.

With detection skill, I already knew about the wolves approaching us, but I pretended to not know so I could hold Myong Myong in my arms and carry him.

[Kururururu...]

As soon as Myong Myong found the wolf pack, he was about to plummet to the ground. I picked him up and held him in my arms.

Operation successful.

As for the wolves, I used the Overwhelm skill and chased them away.

As the wolves moved away to the distance, Myong Myong tried to go back down to the ground.

However, I did not let him.

“Wolves might be still nearby. You are leading the way, so it would be a problem if you got hurt. That’s why I’m going to continue walking while carrying you in my arms. Just like how you are leading the way, my task is to protect you.”

Ku... That was a perfect line that resonates with Myong Myong’s perspective.

Fortunately, Myong Myong was also convinced by my words. He said he understood.

“It would be heavy if we continued on line this...”

No, you are not heavy at all.

In fact, hugging you is healing me.

Like that, while holding Myong Myong in my arms, I continued to move again.

While being held in my arm, Myong Myong directed me to the end of the forest.

The forest was full of huge trees. So, it was like a natural maze. It was difficult to get a sense of direction without Myong Myong's detailed instructions on how to navigate through the forest.

It might be a different story if I used the Talaria's Wings and just flew up.

I really thought about flying up with Myong Myong and getting out of the forest. However, I was concerned that Myong Myong might be scared of it, so I gave up on the idea.

Like that, I walked a little further, and we ran into another group that ambushed us.

This time, instead of a pack of wolves, it was a pack of ghosts.

In this forest, the packs of ghosts regularly appear several times a day.

Like the usual ghosts, they did not attack us, but they were bothersome and uncomfortable to be around.

[Kuuuaaaaaaaaa....]

[Kyaaaaaac...]

There were just two. However, I was supporting Myong Myong with one of my arms, so that posed a problem when I thought about destroying the ghosts.

“Should I go down?”

Myong Myong whispered at my ear.

I shook my head and said it was all right. I brought out a stone from the inventory and held it in my hand.

I focused for a moment and wrapped the stone with Aura.

As my understanding and mastery of mana circuit and aura improved, I became capable of layering Aura on not just weapons but even ordinary objects.

In addition to this, my throwing ability had rose to mid-rank, so I could maintain the Aura on the object even after it was thrown.

I threw the rocks and single handedly destroyed the ghosts.

As I defeated them repeatedly, I found something that could be said was weak point.

Each ghost entity was different, but they all had a spot where the mana was focused.

When I attacked that spot with an attack that had Aura applied, the ghost was destroyed instantly.

[Level Up!]

I defeated the ghosts and asked Myong Myong if he was all right.

“I’m all right.”

He really did look okay.

How he looked now was completely different to how he was earlier when we faced the wolves.

“You are not all that scared of the ghosts?”

Myong Myong nodded and said,

“I had seen them many times, so I’m used to them...”

Used to them, huh...

Could it be that he had seen the ghosts many times while wondering around the forest?

The ghosts were annoying to the ears and eyes, but they did not cause physical harm to the body. So, it seems even Myong Myong was not all that scared of the ghosts.

After confirming that Myong Myong was all right, I put him



down on the ground.

“Let’s rest here for a bit and eat lunch. We can get going again afterwards.”

I put the floor mat on the ground and brought out kitchenware and food ingredients from the dimensional bag. I handed them to Myong Myong.

I put him in charge of preparing the meal and looked at the status window.

As I thought, although I leveled up just now, none of my stats improved.

There was no new skill. There wasn’t any skill that went up in the skill level.

The level up reward didn’t come in this time.

This is the first time where this happened.

I feel uneasy.

The situation was that the stage clear rewards had been decreasing and decreasing already.

During the last stage, God of Death gifted me a power skill, but I didn’t get anything in particular from 17<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Floors.

Even at 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Floor, I only got points and random items as rewards. I didn’t obtain skills as rewards.

When things were like this, now the level-up reward was also gone.

First, I should ask Kiri Kiri after I clear the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor.

I have quite a large amount of information allowance that I had been saving up, so I should be able to get a detailed answer for this along with a proper solution and advice.

I organized my thoughts and directed my gaze at Myong Myong.

Before he prepared the food, he used the flint stone to make a small fire.

He tossed in firewood into the fire and started to pour in water into the pot. Watching him made me think that he was like a fairy from movies that lived in someone's house.

Of course, Myong Myong was way cuter.

“Myong Myong, what do you think of the name, Dobi?”

“It's odd, although it is not as odd as your name.”

# Chapter 136 - Tutorial 19th Floor (5)

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[Round 19, Day 10, 23:55]

“In the kitchen where the feast is being prepared, the dishes are clanking, and the doorbell at the main entrance is ringing and ringing...”

Of numerous great things about Myong Myong, the second one was that he was talented at so many things.

He was good at cooking, laundry and cleaning. Not only that, whenever he was resting, he sang songs like so while dancing along adorably.

Of course, the first great thing about Myong Myong was that he was adorable.

“Myong Myong, you are great at singing too.”

After finishing the song, I complimented him. He covered his mouth with his hands and smiled.

Oh my... How adorable.

It's been ten days since I met Myong Myong after entering the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor.

Through the time, I became even closer with Myong Myong. I also got to know a lot more about him.

Myong Myong likes being complimented.

He also likes being smiled at. He likes having his hand held.

He likes having fairytale stories told to him. He likes having meals together.

Of all, he likes being hugged.

At first, I only held him in my arms when walking. Now, having realized that he likes being hugged, I had been hugging him all day.

Of course, I had to put him back on the ground when he is doing things like preparing meals.

“Do something fun for me too.”

He means that he is requesting me to do something since he just sang to me.

I put forth my right hand.

[Soul collect count: 183]

The ghosts had been ambushing us periodically, and I had been collecting them diligently. So, before long, I collected 183 souls.

I had been working hard every night, so I was able to learn some simple control methods.

“Appear.”

The key things were mana and will.

The mana and holy power for the skill were provided by the God of Death, so I just needed to start the skill.

The word signaled my will to use the skill, and it effectively described the detail of my will.

It was not very different from other skills. So, I could get used to it soon.

Following my command, a small ghost appeared on top of my palm.

According to the Soul Collect's description, the soul I could use maintained its form and abilities depending on the soul's innate abilities and its compatibility with me.

The ghost was not all that powerful, and its compatibility with me was rock bottom.

So, the ghost that appeared on my palm appeared to be smaller than a pinky finger. Also, its body was faintly visible. It was almost transparent.

Kuuuooooaaaa!

The baby ghost roared!

Its effect is incredible!

The roaring sound was like a baby kitten moaning. Myong Myong broke into smile.

The skill looked like it was going to be very difficult to make a good use of during a battle. However, the fact that I could use it to bring smile to Myong Myong made it a great skill.

I watched Myong Myong look at the baby ghost.

Actually, 'appear' and 'disappear' were the only commands I could give to the ghosts.

Orders like, scream, roar or move were not followed or received by the ghosts.

The ghost was acting cute in front of Myong Myong. With its arms tumbling around, it was doing its cute little roar. These actions were all by the ghost's own will, not by my commands.

The souls collected by the Soul Collect all had an individual will and ability to analyze situations. They also had individual personalities and preferences.

The souls of the ghosts usually liked Myong Myong.

The ghosts didn't move at all when I summoned them while being alone. However, when they were in front of Myong Myong, they sometimes acted cute and played in front of him.

Myong Myong watched the baby ghost for a long time. It seems Myong Myong is getting sleepy. He was rubbing his eyes.

"Should I bring out a tent?"

I asked just for the sake of it.

Fortunately, Myong Myong shook his head.

Myong Myong didn't like sleeping in the tent by himself.

Even if it was a little uncomfortable, he preferred staying outside with me, who was standing watch.

During past few days, when I was sitting in front of the bonfire to stand guard, Myong Myong sat on my lap and leaned on me as he slept.

At first, I was worried that it may be uncomfortable. However, because of the flexibility unique to beastmen, it didn't result in things like back pain the next day.

As for me, although it was a little uncomfortable, I liked holding Myong Myong sleeping through the night instead of spending the time pointlessly alone.

I brought out a large blanket from the inventory.

I covered my body and Myong Myong with it. Although the night inside the forest was quite chilly, having the blanket made me feel quite warm.

Soon, Myong Myong fell asleep completely.

Myong Myong fell asleep quickly when he tried to.

I envied him because I suffered from insomnia.

I stroked the back of Myong Myong who was asleep. Like that, I spent the time. However, something tripped my detection skill.

There were ghosts again.

There were 35 of them.

I pulled the blanket and carefully wrapped Myong Myong's body. I slowly got up.

This is the first time that over 30 ghosts to show up at once.

Until now, even when there were many, there were less than 10.

Soon, I could see the 35 ghosts.

Their number was not the only thing that was different about this time. Their appearances were very different from the usual as

well.

They were not human-shaped ghosts in white. They had dark bodies as if they were drenched in mud. It was as if they were hiding themselves in the darkness.

Also, their hands were sharp like ice picks. Their mouths had large teeth like daggers.

I really think these are for attacks?

So far, although I had faced ghosts, I never felt seriously threatened by them. This was because the ghosts were incapable of attacking others physically.

They could only frighten others by appearing suddenly in their white, blurry form to invoke fear.

However, through the detection skill, I could tell their approach before they got close.

Also, the ghosts had poor defenses, so they were no threat to me.

However, these ghosts definitely appeared to be different from the usual ones.

Actually, I was not even sure if they were ghosts.

Maybe they are monsters that look like ghosts.

I can hear their footsteps when they are walking toward me.

These bastards can physically affect their surroundings.

First, I brought out the Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory and formed a spear with it.

I was facing these opponents for the first time, but they were not threats to me.

The problem was Myong Myong, who was asleep in my arm.

It would be far safer for him to keep him in my arms instead of putting him down somewhere.

Also, not only am I hoping that Myong Myong would not get hurt, but I also hope that he won't wake up.

He is sleeping so well. I hope he won't wake up so he does not have to see these ghosts and get scared.

One thing fortunate about the situation was that these ghosts were not screaming to make noises.

The 35 ghosts slowly closed into a circular formation.

I calmly waited for it and thrust my spear forward.

A ghost came within the range. I pierced its core clean.

After its core was pierced, it disappeared like dust. It looks like these are indeed ghosts.

Because I was holding Myong Myong who was asleep, I moved as slowly and cleanly as possible.

Next, I retrieved the spear and took half a step back.

At the same time, I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms's form to a long sword. A ghost was charging into the range. I pierced its core with it and destroyed it.

The two restrictions, having to make the movements small and slow, made the battle quite difficult.

I was giving up speed, which was my strong suit. Instead, I was moving slowly. To compensate for this, I had to be accurate with my predictions and attacks.

I turned around and swung the long sword across.

I swung it slowly as if I was painting with a brush. Two ghosts' cores were precisely caught on its path.

Along with its trajectory, I took a step forward.

Next was a thrust.

I retrieved the Transmutable Thousand Arms to my right waist and then thrust it.



I struck the core of a ghost in front. I pierced through the ghost and took another step forward.

I turned to the side and dodged the icepick-like hands aiming at me from the right.

Along the turning movement, I swung my sword wide and cut the core of the ghost that just finished attacking me.

Although I'm fighting so slowly, it is working out somehow because there is a large difference in ability.

Also, the move I did just now was like something from swordsmanship techniques.

I thought about the swordsmanship techniques I learned from the Knight at the 16<sup>th</sup> Floor.

Although I learned them, I never got to make proper use of them so far. I think I should utilize them in this opportunity.

At 16<sup>th</sup> Floor, at the doppelganger's stage, the swordsmanship I learned from the Knight had one unique attribute.

The swordsmanship was defense-oriented to hold out against attacks, and the techniques ended the duel with a powerful move.

Although the Knight who taught me the techniques did away with defensive measures and used his certain-kill move from the start, the basis of his swordsmanship was completely defensively oriented.

The Knight taught me 38 moves that were the fundamentals of the swordsmanship.

Of the moves, some of them focused on keeping the charging opponent in check while defending.

They were moves like using the shield to block the attack and introducing other variables by stopping the flow of attack.

The moves were defense-oriented. So, the attacks were not

deadly.

However, they were very stable.

The goal of the moves was buying time and forming a solid foundation for defense. So, the moves didn't involve significant risks.

The moves were short. After the parry moves, they always led to other moves that allowed me to safely avoid the attacks or prepare for the next move after defending.

Of the moves that the Knight taught me, I decided to focus on using these defensive moves.

There were many opponents charging at me. Also, I had to minimize my movement and leave no gap for being attacked.

I was certain that I was significantly stronger than the ghosts, so I assessed that I should be able to defeat them all using just the defensive moves.

One step, then another step... I moved forward like that and retreated.

I sidestepped and created distance and prepared the next move.

Again, I took a step forward and faced the approaching opponent a moment sooner.

In preparation for the next opponent, I retreated again and defended my rear.

Using this cycle of moves, I slowly swung my sword. Like that, I was able to defeat all 35 ghosts.

Huuuu...

I breathed out heavily and looked around.

There weren't any opponents left.

On the ground, there were numerous footprints from me.

It looked like as if I just danced at a banquet.

It was strange to see them.

My attack patterns were relatively simple.

Usually, I charged forward and approached the opponent and fought a close-range battle. That was all.

Instead of taking steps and moving a step at a time, I often took a large leap forward.

I thought it was the first time for me to fight while taking numerous steps like I these as if was dancing.

[Mid-rank swordsmanship level increased by one.]

That actually led to a level up.

Is it because I was seriously lacking in fundamentals when it came to this aspect of swordsmanship?

Anyway, this is good.

I had been feeling anxious lately because my skills had not leveled up at all from my overall level increasing.

I should practice the moves I learned from the Knight some more.

Having organized my thoughts, I plummeted down at the floor mat that Myong Myong placed in front of the bonfire again.

I put the Transmutable Thousand Arms away into inventory as well. I calmed my breathing. While I was at it, Myong Myong woke up.

He didn't even open his eyes yet. He muttered something.

I tried my best to not shake him as much as possible. Still, it seemed like I woke him up.

“Myong Myong, what is it? Did you wake up because of all the shaking?”

Myong Myong shook his head.

He buried his face at my chest and said,

“The sound of your heart beat had grown faster, so...”

Oh my... It seemed that he woke up because my heart beat rate increased and he heard it.

“I see. Continue to sleep.”

Fortunately, Myong Myong went back to sleep soon.

\*

Since then, the dark ghosts continued to come.

Unlike white ghosts, the dark ghosts attempted direct attacks, and Myong Myong was afraid of them.

Whenever the dark ghosts appeared, I tried to defeat them as quickly as possible. However, over time, more and more showed up, so Myong Myong ended up afraid for longer during each battle.

[Round 19, Day 14, 16:50]

Myong Myong was in my arms and shaking. I asked him,

“Myong Myong, how long will it take for us to reach the forest?”

In crying voice, Myong Myong said that it will take about nine days.

We had been traveling by walking slowly. I think this is as far as we can go like that.

The path was completely blocked.

The dark ghosts were coming in endless waves. They were blocking the path.

Including ones that I could see and the others within the detection skill's range, I think there are several hundred of them.

As for the ones I cannot see because they are hidden behind tightly packed trees, I cannot even get a feel for it.

Of course, I have the confidence to defeat them all and reach the

destination even if there were several thousand of them.

It is not like this is the first time for me to face an enemy force that approached a thousand in number.

However, I need to protect Myong Myong.

And it's hard to fight against so many while holding him in my arms.

So I need to charge around violently, crashing into my enemies to throw them off balance, without putting him on the ground for a single moment.

Still, I cannot put Myong Myong on the ground for a single moment either.

Alone, Myong Myong won't be able to survive the dark ghosts' attacks for even a moment.

God damn it.

I was enjoying traveling with Myong Myong every day. I was so happy.

These ghosts are meddling to no end.

This is too much.

"Myong Myong. Have you ever wished you could fly in the sky like a bird?"

It seemed Myong Myong was dumbfounded. He stared at me as if he was saying that the question was completely out of the blue given the situation.

I asked again, and Myong Myong said,

"I think flying in the sky would be dangerous..."

"No, it is not dangerous at all."

"Really?"

I put the Transmutable Thousand Arms in the inventory and

tightly held Myong Myong with both of my arms.

I wanted to explain this a little more, but the dark ghosts were approaching. I had to make the move before they came closer.

[Talaria's Wings]

I opened the wings and flew up.

I avoided the tightly packed tree branches and ascended beyond the forest canopy.

The forest was always dark because of the trees blocking the sunlight. We got out of the forest and faced the bright and blue sky.

The scenery was refreshing to watch. It felt like my heart was opening.

The blue sky was extending endlessly above my sky. Below me was a sea of greenery. It was extending to the beyond the horizon.

The view was truly magnificent.

Except for the unwelcomed guests, that is.

Chasing after me and Myong Myong who flew up, the dark ghosts started to fly up.

I didn't know those things could fly too.

While we're at it, let's check just how many of them there are.

I quietly watched the dark ghosts that were rising up to the sky. I slowly felt sick of them.

They continued to rise.

Continuously, endlessly.

In my visual range, when there were over ten thousand of them, I stopped counting. I asked Myong Myong.

"Myong Myong, are you very scared?"

Myong Myong was shaking. He said,

“N... No. I’m not scared. This... Is this really not dangerous?”

“It’s not dangerous. Just trust me.”

Just trust the Big Bro. I cast the line and then tightly held Myong Myong in my arms.

Myong Myong also put his arms around my neck.

I put my hand behind his head and said,

“Now, we are going.”

“I... I trust you!”

At the same time, I activated the Talaria's Wings's flight ability.

From the left, right, front, back, and even below and above... There were dark ghosts that were charging at me. To avoid the ghosts, I started to fly at full speed.

# Chapter 137 - Tutorial 19th Floor (6)

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There were several tens of thousands of dark ghosts coming at me. Still, I am confident that we could escape them.

My confidence is based on two things.

First, the dark ghosts' flight speed is not all that fast.

They were way behind Talaria's Wings's flight speed.

Of course, since I am holding Myong Myong, I am not going to be able to use the maximum speed. Still...

Secondly, I had the Soul Steal, which will be critical against the ghosts.

[Soul Steal]

The Soul Steal's effect was applied on the ghosts that were coming at me.

The dark ghosts usually didn't make any sounds. However, once the Soul Steal was used, they started to scream in pain. It seems they were suffering.

There were several tens of thousands ghosts, and they were all starting to moan in pain. It is creepy experiencing this.

With the Soul Steal applied, the ghosts' flight speed has slowed significantly.

The Soul Steal's cheat like qualities included that superb effect, but moreover, there were also that the effects were applied in a very wide range, and the effects were not affected by the number of the targets.

The skill's performance is not negatively affected no matter how many enemies there were; let it be orders of thousands, tens of thousands or more.

Through the noticeably slower dark ghosts, I flew through them



as if I was doing aerobatics.

In the past, I had used the Talaria's Wings's flight ability many times through long hours. So, I am quite used to the flight, and I was able to lose the ghosts pursuing us.

The dark ghosts chased after us. They didn't give up. However, there is the difference in speed, so they were not able to catch up to us.

Instead, the distance between us and the ghosts continued to increase over time.

We escaped their formation. Now, we have some moment to spare. Myong Myong moved his head to direct the way.

Initially, Myong Myong was afraid of the flight. However, that didn't last long. Now, he is smiling like the little kid he is.

He said he liked the wind pouring onto his face more than the flight itself. He said the wind was cool and refreshing.

After a while, I even held Myong Myong up so that he could fully face our destination with his body.

Like that, we flew for a few hours. The lush forest ended, and a wide green field started to come inside the view.

It seems to be the destination.

All I did was follow Myong Myong's directions to get here. We were able to get here without getting lost.

Unlike my initial concern, Myong Myong is not afraid of the flight. So, we were able to get here faster than I thought.

If I knew this, it would've been better if we moved by flying since the first day.

Wait, if we did, then my journey with Myong Myong would have become shorter.

The pace was slow, but it is enjoyable traveling through the

forest with Myong Myong.

Thinking about that made me feel sad that we left the forest.

“Myong Myong, should we land and walk from now on?”

Out of foolish regrets, I asked.

“Ho, are you very tired?”

It seems Myong Myong interpreted my question to mean that I must be tired and having difficulty in maintaining the flight.

Talaria's Wings is a power skill. It didn't spend any of my own power for its use.

However, I decided to keep quiet and nodded to say that I was.

After seeing me express that I was exhausted, concerns and a sense of apology showed in his large, round eyes.

Could it be that he is thinking I overdone the flight for him and got tired because he said he liked flying?

It is poking my conscious.

I avoided the random tree branches that were tangled up and landed on the surface.

As soon as we landed, Myong Myong said to me,

“Ho, let's eat here and rest before going again.”

I looked around the area with my detection skill and then agreed.

The dark ghosts were not even near the area yet.

We came here at quite the high speed. I think we have plenty of time to eat and rest for a bit.

As Myong Myong requested, I brought out various things for him from the inventory and the dimensional bag.

First, Myong Myong fixed some uneven surfaces on the ground and picked off rocks.

At an even surface, he placed the floor mat and cushion seats.

He firmly pressed the cushion to see if it was soft. Myong Myong said, “Ho. Have a seat here and rest. I’ll prepare everything by myself.”

Usually, even when Myong Myong took charge of cooking, I handled setting the places to sit on the ground and making the fire.

However, perhaps because Myong Myong thought I was tired, he said he would do everything by himself.

I knew Myong Myong liked doing things for other people, so I let him be. I sat on the cushion seat.

I watched Myong Myong be busy. It is pleasant to watch. However, at the same time, I felt sad. The feeling kept on lingering.

If we walk like this, we were going to be able to leave the forest in half a day or a day at the most.

I was about to sigh, but I held it in.

Myong Myong would worry if he saw me sigh.

I took a moment to organize my thoughts. I decided.

I decided to take Myong Myong to the outside of the forest as soon as the meal is over, and I will take him there without hesitation.

During the last floor, I had been circling around out of my desire and greed to stay there longer. I handled the stage haphazardly. I remembered the result of my actions very well. They were still very vivid in my head.

There is no guarantee that the same kind of things would not happen.

I did not want to experience something so horrible again. So, I decided to take Myong Myong outside of the forest right away and clear the stage.

That is what I decided.

Myong Myong was preparing the food. However, it seemed he saw the gloomy atmosphere on my face. He was holding a pot, but he put it down and walked toward me.

He went to my back and massaged my shoulders.

Myong Myong's height was about the same as my sitting height. So, he had to stand on the tips of his toes and massage my shoulders.

“Was it very exhausting?”

I could feel the sincerity in his voice. He is genuinely concerned.

I felt something surging up from inside.

I was holding down the sigh, but I could not help but to let it out.

I felt like something else was going to fall down if I didn't sigh.

I raised my hand and held Myong Myong's tiny hand that was on my shoulder.

“No. I'm fine.”

I wanted to sound as normal as I could. However, my voice was shaking a little.

Myong Myong leaned on my back and hugged me.

I felt the warmth coming from the back. As I felt the warmth, I could be even more certain of my decision.

It is truly unfortunate that I could not be with this child longer. However, I am unaware of the traps still left in this stage. Therefore, I must clear the stage as fast as I can. That is what I decided.

I swear that I won't let the horrible misfortune hiding in the stage to surface in front of this child.

I swear that I'll resolve it no matter what if it does happen before I clear the stage.

We finished the meal and cleaned up the place. At that time, I could hear the ghastly scream in the distance. I thought the dark ghosts could not catch up to us today because of their slow flight speed. So, I could not help but to be surprised.

I flew up to the top of a tree. From there, I saw something unexpected.

The one approaching with ghastly scream was indeed a dark ghost.

However, there is just one ghost instead of the swarm earlier.

Also, the ghost is truly humongous.

The ghost completely covered the open sky. It is so large that it is fully blocking the sunlight.

When the swarm of dark ghosts faced the situation where they could not catch up to me and Myong Myong before we leave the forest, could it be that they combined together or something?

The gigantic dark ghost is approaching us at an incredible speed.

First, I quickly went down to the surface and explained the situation to Myong Myong.

After that, I brought out the tent from the inventory and set it up in middle of trees.

The tent had several magical effects installed, including camouflage. So, it should be better than being out in the open.

I ushered Myong Myong into the tent and used the Soul Collect skill.

[Soul collect count: 11043]

They were the souls I had been collecting all along so far.

They were mostly white and dark ghosts.

I had been experimenting through the past few days. So, I already checked that the collected souls do not join forces with other

ghosts.

“All of you, appear.”

The skill was activated. The souls of the ghosts came out and filled the area around the tent where Myong Myong was in.

The souls were all tiny, smaller than the size of a pinky finger. Still, there were over ten thousand of them, so they exuded quite the presence.

“All of you, protect Myong Myong.”

These were the souls who would ignore a command as simple as moving forward when given from me. However, when it came to requests related to Myong Myong, they usually granted the requests.

The requests such as “surprise Myong Myong” or “be around Myong Myong” and other requests like that were usually granted.

So, I tried out the command while hoping for the best. Fortunately, the souls followed my words and gathered tightly around Myong Myong.

As for the souls that could not enter the tent, they made a large barricade around the tent.

When I tried to approach the tent, the souls all opened their arms and screamed.

... I had no idea what kind of combat abilities I could expect out of them, but their presence should be better than nothing.

“Myong Myong, please wait here for a bit.”

Beyond the tightly packed wall of souls, Myong Myong complained and begged me not to leave him alone, but I ignored his complaint.

Until now, I was confident about being able to protect Myong Myong regardless of the strength of my enemies.

So far, it was actually safer for Myong Myong to be right next to me at all times.

However, currently, there is a huge enemy approaching.

Instead of having Myong Myong coming with me, it is the right choice to have him stay here and go to the battle by myself.

After placing defensive measures around Myong Myong, I opened Talaria's Wings and flew up to the sky.

While watching the gigantic ghost approaching rapidly, I organized my battle plan.

I don't know how powerful the ghost's defenses were. Still, I don't think it would be able to block an attack that has Aura Blade applied.

Moreover, I could feel the giant ghost's core clearly.

It is a mountain-sized ghost. However, I should be able to eliminate it if I destroy that core.

The problem is that this important core is inside the ghost's body. Also, I didn't have a weapon that could pierce the core in a single shot.

To reach that ghost's core, which is located in the middle of the ghost, I will need a weapon that is at least as long as a building.

However, to destroy the ghost, I have to destroy the core.

I changed the Transmutable Thousand Arms's form to a long spear.

There is only one answer I can think of.

Using Aura Blade-based attacks, I need to cut away little by little toward the center of the ghost from the outside.

I'll repeat the process until its core is exposed, and then I'll destroy the core.

I will fight in a relatively simple pattern.

The gigantic ghost possesses incredible speed, and it also has sharp ice pick-like hands and huge teeth. Still, I am confident about dodging all of the ghost's attack midair.

So, the battle is going to be about if I could destroy the core before being exhausted. It is a battle of attrition.

[Kuuuuuurrrrrr!]

As the distance closed, the giant ghost hastened its speed by a level and charged toward me. Watching the ghost, I tightened my grip on my hand.

Although my plan is scratching away at the ghost's body little by little, considering the ghost's huge size, I had to make the Aura as long as possible.

Having the Aura to extend beyond the weapon is a very exhausting practice. So, I must activate the Aura only during the moments when I'm attacking.

[Battle Focus]

I used the skill and calmed my breathing.

Instead of the enemy's attack, I should focus more on my own attacks.

[Kuuuooooaaaaa!]

The ghost came to a close range. It constantly roared.

Instead of waiting for it to attack, I approached into its arm's range.

As soon as I approached it, the ghost swung its arms to attack me. Its gigantic arm is coming at me up front.

Instead of it being an arm, I feel like a building is flying towards me.

In fact, that's probably closer to what's actually happening.

I dodged the ghost's arm by a thin margin and diagonally swung



the spear which had the Aura applied.

By the time the ghost's arm reached the other side in the distance, I was able to leave a long wound on the arm.

Lengthwise, the wound is over a few dozen meters long. However, in comparison to the ghost's gigantic body, it is not even noticeable.

Damn it. When will I reach and destroy the core at this rate?

This is totally just going to be a grind.

\*

[Round 19, Day 15, 07:10]

[Kuuuuooooaaaa...]

With a scream that sounded as if the source was moving away to the distance, the gigantic ghost dissipated into the empty air.

I confirmed that the ghost is destroyed and then used the Soul Collect skill.

[Soul collect count: 211659]

The count had increased substantially.

As I thought, the gigantic ghost was the result of a huge number of ghosts combining together.

Still, are the souls not merged as one and recognized individually?

I think I should ask Kiri Kiri about this later.

Two hundred thousand, an incredible number, were added. Still, I am not able to feel all that happy.

I am too tired to feel that way.

The ghost was literally the size of a mountain. To destroy its core, I spent several hours flying around and swinging my spear.

Later in the battle, one of the ghost's arms was cut off in a whole.

So, its attack patterns had been one sided since. Although I had been pouring on attacks since then, it still took too much time.

The battle started during the dinner time. However, the battle ended in the morning the next day.

I landed and disengaged the Talaria's Wings.

As soon as my legs that supported my body weight hit the ground, my knees faltered.

I spent too much mana.

It seems my mana circuit is affected. A corner of my stomach felt stiff.

My stamina also felt empty.

I think it has been a very long time since I have exhausted myself like this.

I moved my faltering legs and headed to the tent where Myong Myong is.

Fortunately, there were still over ten thousand souls of ghosts that were standing watch around the tent.

“Step aside.”

I commanded the souls who were blocking the tent's entrance. However, the souls did not step aside.

“... Disappear.”

Fortunately, the “disappear” command was effective.

The countless souls suddenly disappeared.

With the souls gone, I was able to look inside the tent.

Inside the tent, Myong Myong was there. He is sobbing while being curled up just like how he was on the first day we met.

“Myong Myong, did you wait long?”

Having heard me, Myong Myong quickly got up and rushed into

my arms.

He tried to say things, but I am not able to understand them exactly.

Still, I could be certain about what he meant for the most part.

It seems that he is very scared. He is unable to stop crying. I brushed Myong Myong's back and sighed.

For a Hell Difficulty floor, I thought the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor stage was going rather smoothly, so I was starting to feel worried.

Usually, when a Hell Difficulty stage felt easy, it meant there was a trap hiding somewhere.

However, now that I safely defeated the gigantic ghost that appeared at the end, I felt slightly at ease.

With lightened heart, I patted Myong Myong's back and consoled him. Myong Myong is unable to stop crying.

\*

[Round 19, Day 15, 13:05]

I held Myong Myong's hand and continued to walk. We arrived at the line that is the border of the forest.

Beyond the border is a wide green field.

Also, in this place where the forest ended and the green field started, there is a small village.

It is Myong Myong's home village.

Myong Myong said his tribe members were all skilled at housework, and they took on the professions for helping others.

So, if only his tribe members lived together, since they all would insist on doing works such as cleaning and decorating, the economy of the village would not function smoothly.

Therefore, most of the tribe members left the village to work in

other places.

He said that his tribe members usually got work from the merchants who stopped by at the village and left the village together.

Because of that, some are away from the village for a few months to several years, and some stay away for a long time, even up to half of one's lifespan. Like that, Myong Myong's tribe members worked at places far from the home village and earned money.

He said that they return to the village once there isn't any more work. They would rest and find new work or prepare for retirement.

They were quite literally benevolent house spirits.

Perhaps because this is the village of such a tribe, the roads around the village were organized neatly.

There is a large wooden fence that surrounded the entire village. However, instead of a practical fence, the fence is decorated like something out of a modern day's movie set.

The scenery inside the fence that I could see is also clean and humble.

I held Myong Myong's hand as we walked toward the village. A message appeared.

[You cleared 19<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Tutorial in Hell Difficulty.]

[All of your abnormality and wounds will be healed.]

[You acquired 3000 points as clear reward.]

[You acquired 3000 points for the first clear.]

[Many gods are showing positive responses to you. You acquired 3500 points.]

[Many gods are showing negative responses to you. You lost 600 points.]

[Additional rewards are given based on the play record.]

[You acquired 4500 points as an additional reward.]

I succeeded in clearing the floor.

It looked like this is the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor.

A portal appeared below my feet.

I stopped for a moment, and Myong Myong looked up at me.

Um... Should I at least take him to the inside of the village and then leave?

Thinking like that, I started to walk toward the village again.

Step after step, my steps felt heavy. While I walked toward the village, the village's wooden fence suddenly moved.

The fence made a loud noise and slammed closed in front of me and Myong Myong.

I vacantly stood there. I was unable to say anything about the situation. At that moment, from beyond the wooden fence, I heard a locking sound.

I think the village is definitely refusing to allow me and Myong Myong to enter the place.

What is this?

The stage is cleared already, so what is this?

# Chapter 138 - Tutorial 19th Floor (7)

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I stare at the wooden fence, which closed with a loud bang.

Next, I look at Myong Myong, who had his head down for some reason.

After that, as the last thing, I looked at the portal that appeared below me.

Is this saying that I should get on the portal or not?

Even after I cleared the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor, there were things happening such as suspicious people visiting the island.

However, I think this is a little different from that.

What is happening now didn't happen until well after the stage was cleared like how it happened at the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor. Unlike the 18<sup>th</sup> Floor, this new development is happening as result of me bringing Myong Myong to the village as directed by the instructions. Also, is happening immediately afterwards.

I have not seen any stages in Hell Difficulty so far with such a progression.

I have not heard about stages like this in other difficulties either.

We successfully got out of the forest and brought Myong Myong to the village. Myong Myong safely arrived at the village.

Also, the clear message and portal appeared.

The story ends here.

That's how it should be.

However, in front of Myong Myong's eyes, the village's gate is firmly shut. Myong Myong's mouth is firmly closed with his head drooped.

Even though the stage was cleared, I cannot leave. My heart is not at ease.

From beyond the closed wooden fence, there is no response.

There is no voice refusing our entry or telling us to go away.

The fence is shut. That is all.

I tried to take a knee to level my eyes at Myong Myong's.

However, Myong Myong's face is directed at the ground. I cannot see it at all.

I bring my hand at his cheek so I could lift his head. However, Myong Myong suddenly turned around and started to run.

He is scurrying away to the forest. I quietly watched Myong Myong's back from a distance.

I cannot chase after him right away.

I briefly saw his face. His face was covered in tears.

I got up and looked at the village's fence for a moment.

I could see that there is a face above the fence.

Red fox ears.

It is a face of a woman in her 20s.

Could she have closed and locked the fence?

I wanted to voice my complaint, asking what the hell is this for. However, I decided to chase after Myong Myong first.

Chasing after Myong Myong, I enter the forest again.

As I expected, Myong Myong is hiding behind a large tree, crunching down.

"Myong Myong."

Myong Myong didn't answer.

He only cried quietly.

I want to have him stand up somehow and talk with him. However, it seems that he was not able to hear me properly.

He cried and muttered something.

I could not understand it.

The articulation of his words was not clear enough. So, the knowledge before the time of Babel was not able to translate it.

However, I have heard Myong Myong muttering words like these before a few times.

Based on my memories from those instances, Myong Myong must be mumbling about one of the two.

I am sorry, or I am scared.

It is one of the two.

Regardless of which, I don't like either of them.

I took a moment to brush Myong Myong's back. He is still unable to calm down. I left him be and got up.

[Soul Collect]

[Soul collect count: 211659]

“Appear.”

I summoned all of over two hundred thousand souls.

The area was filled with finger-sized souls of ghosts.

“Protect Myong Myong.”

As I saw once last time, the souls tightly surrounded Myong Myong.

With so many, I am sure they will buy me time until I return.

I turned around and walked.

I brought out two Transmutable Thousand Arms from the inventory.

I form one into a long sword and the other into a sheath.

I place the long sword inside the sheath and wear it on my waist.



I had promised before.

If anything happened to Myong Myong while I went through this stage, then I'll definitely resolve it.

I will keep my promise.

It is a promise that I must keep.

I left the forest and headed back to Myong Myong's home village again.

The wooden fence, which was firmly shut earlier, is open wide again.

Seeing it turned my insides upside down.

Ugh.

I take a deep breath.

I do not know what's going on yet.

So, I am trying hard to be calm, but I cannot help the anger surging up inside.

The fence which closed in front of Myong Myong, and all the traces of abuse that were left on Myong Myong's body...

There must be a connection between the two.

If the perpetrator is inside this village....

As I approached the village's entrance, I could see the fox-like human walking toward me.

It is the female beastman who I saw earlier. She was on top of the fence back then.

If she shows even a little bit of hostility toward me, or if she didn't have eyes full of tears, I may not be able to suppress my anger anymore. I might draw my sword.

Otherwise, I might just charge at her.

My head is full of blood, and it is not rolling properly. However,

seeing the sadness in her face calmed my head a little.

Again, I slowly breathe out.

Perhaps because of my heated inside, I feel like even my breath is warm.

“Are you the one who brought Myong Myong?”

I nod.

After that, I decided.

I decided to make the move after having a clear understanding of what is happening.

I cannot resolve issues while being so heated up in my head.

Also, this is not my problem. It concerns Myong Myong.

Even if I have something to be angry about, I should put it aside for now.

“Are you also the one who defeated the giant ghost that appeared in the forest?”

I nodded again.

“I see... Myong Myong... Where is he?”

“He is crying inside the forest.”

The ears of the female beastman are fully drooped.

It does not look like she harbors ill feeling towards Myong Myong?

“... I understand. I think the conversation will take long. Would you like to come in for a moment?”

Seeing that she is attempting to have me enter the village, it looks like they locked the fence because of Myong Myong. I’m sure of it now.

I want to understand this situation quickly, so I agreed to enter as she suggested.

After that, she led the way, and I followed her into the village.

The village is neatly organized as I saw from the outside the fence.

However, I barely feel any presence of others.

I tried spreading the mana.

I could feel a few, but in comparison to the size of the village, there are just too few of them.

Could it be that they all went to other places?

As I walked through the village, I saw a gentle mound in the distance.

It is not visible from the forest's direction.

I feel a powerful presence there.

It is an excessively huge concentration of mana.

\*

As I tried to sit at the reception area, and a few beastmen approached me.

I instinctively became alert and wary of them.

They pulled a chair behind me and placed a cushion on it. They also prepared fruits and tea for me before going away.

Without making any sound, as if they were sliding away, they left the room. Watching them creeped me out a little.

Of the beastmen who just left the room, I am sure not one of them has stealth skill level that is lower than mine.

To see that such skilled practitioners practicing common labors such as pulling chairs and setting up tables while wearing maid uniforms...

They really are gentle house spirits.

“Let's start the conversation.”

Anyway, that's that, and I should ask what I want to ask.

I say to the female beastman who is sitting in front of me.

I could properly observe her appearance only after sitting at the reception room.

Unlike round, puppy-like cute face that Myong Myong had, the woman is an archetypically beautiful fox woman.

"My name is Lalalila. I'm in charge of managing the village. First, I would like to express my gratitude for protecting Myong Myong. By any chance, do you know about our tribe?"

"I didn't know anything before meeting Myong Myong. I have not heard much from Myong Myong either."

I told her that I did hear a brief summary from Myong Myong about the special characteristics of the tribe.

"I see... I don't know where to start..."

It seems Lalalila is not the kind who is confident with explaining things.

"Start with explaining why you locked the fence."

I think it would be better to ask each issue individually and resolve my curiosities one after the other.

"If Myong Myong entered the village, then the ghosts will start to attack the villagers. It cannot be helped."

Ghosts?

"Aren't the ghosts supposed to appear in the forest?"

"Ah... So you didn't know about that either. The ghosts appear around Myong Myong. To be precise, they chase after others who come close to Myong Myong."

The ghosts do not appear naturally at the forest? Instead, they appear around Myong Myong?

Let's go over my memories of what has happened so far.

When the message explained the stage, it said the forest was rumored to spawn ghosts.

The ghosts definitely came to find me and Myong Myong.

It didn't look like they just wandered around the forest and found me by coincidence.

Even when we left the area, they actively pursued us.

Myong Myong was not afraid of white ghosts.

He said he was used to them because he had seen them many times.

The ones Myong Myong was afraid of were the dark ghosts, and they made their first appearances only after I destroyed the white ghosts for a few days.

Considering what has happened, what Lalalila explained made pretty good sense.

“So, why are there ghosts appearing around Myong Myong?”

“It is a curse.”

“A curse?”

“Yes. We do not know the details either, but it seems that Myong Myong was subjected to extreme torture by someone while he was working in a foreign land.”

I thought about the scars on Myong Myong's body.

However, what does that have to do with the curse?

“The curse is probably directed at the one who inflicted them on Myong Myong.”

“Can you explain it a bit more detail? I do not understand it at all.”

“Our tribe members usually work in foreign lands. You know about this much, right?”

I nodded to affirm her assumption.

“When we first started working in outside places, we were subjected to a lot of harassment by other races.”

I could nod without difficulty

I have been thinking that all along.

They liked helping others, and they took on life-long professions on such tasks.

I don't think all employers who hired and used them would be kind to them.

Usually, people were cruel to others under them. Also, they were crueler when the others who worked under them were gentle-spirited.

“So, we asked for help from our Great Mother.”

“Great Mother?”

“Yes, to our guardian goddess.”

It seemed Lalalila thought I obviously knew who this goddess was. Lalalila didn't add more to her explanation about the goddess.

I also have a guess when it came to who the Great Mother would be.

The gentle mound that I saw while walking through the village...

The huge existence who is asleep under it must be the Great Mother.

“The Great Mother cursed the ones who hurt our tribe members. The curse consisted of having ghosts coming to visit the ones responsible for hurting our tribe members.”

“In that case, the one who hurt Myong Myong is...”

“Yes, that one was probably killed by the ghosts.”

Although the white ghosts' combat abilities are low, from an

ordinary person's perspective, they are definitely existences to be feared.

They appear out of nowhere. Only few would manage to hold back a nervous breakdown and remain calm.

Also, even if one overcame the white ghosts, after that, the dark ghosts who can deal physical attacks will come.

Since their numbers increase continuously, I saw no possibility that the bastard who hurt Myong Myong would still be alive.

It felt great inside, but I was also disappointed.

If given the chance, I wanted to beat the shit out of that bastard and kill that piece of scum myself.

I could relax a little now.

It is not like the one who hurt Myong Myong was in this place. Also, it is not like Myong Myong is being rejected by the village.

All of this was going to be handled once the curse was resolved.

“In that case, why are there ghosts appearing around Myong Myong still when the one responsible for hurting Myong Myong is dead?”

“The Great Mother punishes those who hurt our tribe members. Also, as a warning, the Great Mother curses areas where the atrocity had occurred, and it lasts until she removes the curse.”

“In the area? Isn't the curse in effect with Myong Myong's body as the medium?”

“Actually, the curse is cast with... the corpse as the medium. The curses appear after our tribe members are killed.”

“Now what are you talking...”

“Yes. Of course, Myong Myong is alive. We think that Myong Myong was on the verge of death but miraculously survived. He was injured so critically that the curse which appears only after

death activated. Regardless, he recovered and returned to the village. Actually, this has never happened before, so we are not sure either.”

Although Lalalira said that she was not confident in her theory, even I thought her theory was in line with the situation.

I should be able to confirm this if I hear from Myong Myong.

“In that case, is the curse going to continue for the rest of his life? To all who come near Myong Myong?”

“No. Since Myong Myong appeared in front of the village two weeks ago for the first time, we have been performing a ceremony to awaken the Great Mother every time there is the full moon. Once the Great Mother wakes up from her sleep, we should be able to undo the curse as well.”

“When is this Great Mother going to wake up?”

“T... That is... It depends on how deep of a sleep she is in. If she wakes up early, it could be in a few days. However, if it takes long, it might be after few years.”

Ugh.

I cannot help but to sigh.

She is saying that there is no limit to her sleep.

“So, excuse me... I have a request... request to make. While we awaken the Great Mother, can you please look after Myong Myong?”

“I will.”

Lalalila said it may take several years. However, it won't take that long.

I have no intention of waiting for this being called Great Mother to wake up through the ceremony.

When it comes to bastards who cannot wake up from the sounds



of alarm clocks, you need to give them a good smack on the back to wake them up.

## Chapter 139 - Tutorial 19th Floor (8)

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Compared to how worried I am, the situation is not as bad.

It is not like Myong Myong is being bullied and cast out by the villagers. Also, although I do not know who hurt Myong Myong, the bastards who did were probably all killed by the ghosts.

My work will be done once I resolve this curse issue.

I lean on the back support of the chair I am sitting on.

I was stiff and alert all this time. Now, I am getting relaxed, and that is making me feel tired.

“Would you like to wait for a bit while drinking tea? We are preparing food for Myong Myong. We would like you to wait for a bit and deliver the food to Myong Myong later.”

I have plenty of food in the inventory, so I don't really need to get their help on this.

However, I knew that they were also worried about Myong Myong, so I decided to agree on the request.

While I am sitting like that, I suddenly think of a question.

“The place I met Myong Myong at was at the center of the forest. Why was Myong Myong there all by himself? Even if you could not go near him, you could have helped him in different ways, such as leaving food on a pre-arranged place for him to pick up that's nearby the village?”

Lalalila slightly blushed and responded,

“It was Myong Myong's choice. Our tribe members like helping others, and we live for that purpose.”

“I know. I've heard that many times before.”

“Also, as a negative side of that desire... We prefer not to... get help from others.”

“... Although it looked like he was going to starve to death, he left to the center of the forest because he didn’t want to get help? Myong Myong did that?”

“Yes... Our core identity and pride are about helping others and not being burden, so...”

No matter how hard I think about this, they are too obsessive about these.

Even Dobi is not this diligent.

I can understand their reasons, but I do not feel the same about the issue.

“In response, if we receive favors from another, we spend our entire life to repay their generosity. Myong Myong will most definitely try to do volunteer work for you for the rest of his life. A... Also... I... I... will... for you...”

Lalalila was blushing already, but now she is blushing heavily. I am concerned that blood will start leaking out of her skin. Her face is the shade of a candy apple.

She covered her face with her hands and continued to say that she would spend the rest of her life doing volunteer services for me.

Myong Myong was like this, and now Lalalila is doing this too. It seems this entire tribe covers their faces with hands when they are embarrassed.

“I’m merely delivering food for him. There is no need for you to do volunteer work for me for the rest of your life.”

Honestly, that feels burdensome on me.

Also, I’ll be leaving this place soon.

Their intentions and hearts are kind. However, I won’t be able to receive their kindness.

“N... No! My role is managing the village and the living

arrangements of the villagers! Helping Myong Myong is my work. It is only obvious that I should repay you for helping me!”

Her face is still covered with her hands. With her eyes closed, she shouted those words.

She is being stubborn. I am aware that it is not about keeping the decision she made but a matter of her pride.

Myong Myong has shown similar responses when I tried to help him when he was working.

She must be thinking that it is also her work to repay me.

I just said I understood and that she could do it.

Who is she going to do volunteer work for once I’m gone anyway?

I accepted all of her requests. However, Lalalila said she also had one more request for me.

“What is it again?”

“Myong Myong will feel like he is being a burden if he notices that the foods we prepared are from us. Also, if you tell him that you will stay with him to protect him, he might go back to the inside of the forest again.”

Considering the behaviors of Myong Myong and the tribe members I have observed so far, given their characteristics, I really think he would do that.

Now that I think about it, I didn’t tell Myong Myong that I will be escorting him back to the village. Instead, I told him that I was lost and I would like him to be my guide to get out of the forest. That really was a brilliant move.

“You want me to formulate an appropriate lie for those, right? I got it.”

“Thank you. Really, really thank you. Also, Myong Myong probably is not aware of what exactly is happening to him. So,

please...”

“I got it. I’ll give him a simple explanation.”

It should be enough to tell him that the ghosts won’t be appear around him anymore and he won’t have to worry anymore.

With marble-sized teardrops rolling from her eyes, Lalalila repeatedly expressed her gratitude.

To watch such a beautiful woman like her thanking me while crying... It is quite...

“Ah, I have not even asked the name of the one who had been so kind. Can you please tell me your name? We will record it and pass it down through the generations.”

I wish you guys didn’t do such things. It is making me feel uncomfortable.

I know she is not going to listen if I said that, so I decided to tell her my name.

“Lee Ho-jae.”

“Pardon?”

“I said my full name is Lee Ho-jae. My family name is Lee. My name is Ho-jae.”

“Ho.... Hooo... Jae? Pardon?”

“Ugh. My name is Lee Ho-jae.”

Lalalila suddenly got up and rushed out of the reception room.

She ran out in such a hurry that the cup of tea above the table was tilted over. The chair fell over as well. She ran out making loud noises.

If I didn’t hear it wrong...

Just before she closed the reception room’s door, didn’t I hear suppressed laughter?

Is it just my mood?

Lalalila returned after five minutes.

She came back with two other beastmen. They are carrying food supplies in full. Unlike earlier, she looks calm now.

I pushed in the supplies she handed to me.

“You have such a useful thing. Anyway, I was very rude earlier. I am very sorry. I apologize for the behavior. I didn’t know that our benefactor would make such a joke...”

“No. I am not joking. My name is Lee Ho-jae.”

“Hupuuuuuhuhuhu.... Uuuup.”

“Kup. Koloc. Koloc. Koloc. Uuhuuuk. Kolok.”

Their reactions are totally amazing.

The two other beastmen who came with Lalalila showed incredible reactions as soon as they heard my name.

One broke into laughter without realizing, and she poked herself in the side to calm herself.

The other one tried to hold in the laughter and ended up coughing due to asphyxiation.

As for Lalalila, she turned her face away.

Her shoulder is shaking. So, it seems that she is having a hard time holding in the laughter.

It would be alright if I got mad about this, right?

I can be angry, right?

\*

Of course, I knew well that my name sounded ridiculously funny to the beastman kind.

There are the cases of Kiri Kiri and Myong Myong.

However, it usually spoiled my mood, so it did spoil my mood.

I know that they are not laughing intentionally, but I don't want to let it be.

Unable to sit still, Lalalila and other beastmen tumbled down and apologized. However, I shot back at them and complained how could they treat me like this when they said I am their benefactor. After that, I got out of the village.

Instead of making me feel refreshed, it made me feel uncomfortable instead.

Lalalila and the other beastmen are very apologetic.

Watching them kicking themselves over the matter is making me feel sorry that I expressed my anger at them.

In the end, because of the awkwardness between each other, I left out of the reception room.

Anyway, just what does my name mean? Why are they reacting like this?

In the end, nobody is willing to tell me what it meant.

Should I pour in my information allowance to determine its true meaning?

Otherwise, should I make a request for information through the Order?

Ask what the word ho-jae means in beastman's language?

No, that is a little embarrassing. The meaning of it might spread to others too.

I left the village and returned to the forest.

Fortunately, it seems that nothing happened to the souls who had been protecting Myong Myong.

“Step aside, will ya?”

The souls did not step aside.

I tried to approach Myong Myong while ignoring the souls, and

the souls screamed kuuuang, kuuaaang, making similar noises.

Their arms are the size of tiny rice grains. They lift their tiny arms up and roar at me. It is ridiculous.

They are even getting tangled up and colliding with each other in the process of stopping me.

Aren't you guys liking Myong Myong a little too much?

“Disappear.”

Fortunately, they respond to the disappear command.

With the souls surrounding him now gone, I could see Myong Myong.

He is on the ground, curled up in a ball.

Also, he is still sobbing.

I go next to Myong Myong and sat down.

It seems Myong Myong knew I came. He lifted his head.

Still, I could not see the look on his face.

“I am sorry...”

Saying he is sorry...

It seems that what he was mumbling earlier was also this.

I wonder what it is that he is sorry about?

Is he thinking that he was being a burden and causing harm to me and the people of the village?

I raise my hand and brush Myong Myong's head.

“Thanks to you, I was able to get out of the forest. Thank you, Myong Myong.”

Having heard my words, Myong Myong lifted his head and looked at me in the eyes.

What a face...



I bring out a handkerchief and wipe off the tears from his face.

Even in middle of all these things, Myong Myong is still uncomfortable with getting help from me. He held the handkerchief himself and wiped his own tears.

He is a lot calmer than earlier now.

“I think I’ll be staying here for a while.”

“... Here?”

“Yes. Near here. If it is alright with you, would you like to stay with me for a while?”

I am intending on forcing the existence called the Great Mother to wake up. However, I don’t know how long it would actually take.

Perhaps I will fail at waking her up and will have to wait for her to wake up through the ceremony that Lalalila mentioned.

“Together?”

“Yes. I would like you to cook meals for me, converse with me and go on walks with me while you are staying with me. Unless you don’t want to stay with...”

“That’s great!”

“Shall we get going then?”

“Yes.”

His face finally brightened.

They say you will grow horns on your butt if you suddenly smile while crying. Still, it is good to see Myong Myong smile.

“Also, Myong Myong, I’ve heard about you a little from the village.”

“Y... yes...”

His face darkened, back to how it was earlier. Oh my...

“The villagers said that the ghosts won’t appear around you anymore once the Great Mother wakes up.”

“R... really?”

“Yes. Although we may have to wait for a bit until the Great Mother wakes up.”

Myong Myong is trying to hold it in, but he started crying again.

They are not tears of sadness.

They are tears of relief and happiness.

I hold Myong Myong in my arms and lull him.

\*

I check the face of Myong Myong who is asleep in the sleeping bag, then got out of the tent.

He is not even well at the moment, and he cried whole day long. Perhaps, because of this, Myong Myong was very tired.

Using the food ingredients that the villagers packed for us, we haphazardly prepared food. I set up the tent and had Myong Myong go to sleep right away.

I summoned the souls to watch over the tent and head over to the mound that I saw during the day.

Because I am on an open field, I could see the night sky. It has been a while.

When I was inside the forest, thanks to the excessively lush trees, I could not see the sky.

There are so many stars in the sky. They look as if they could rain down. In the midst of all these stars is a moon.

It is a crescent moon.

As I walked while enjoying the night sky, I reach the mound.

I knew the way I needed to go.

I didn't figure out the path that led to the Great Mother's sleeping place from Lalalila.

However, I can pinpoint as to where to go with certainty.

I head to the place where humongous amounts of mana are being exuded energetically. There is a small opening. It is barely large enough for one person to go through.

In front of this small cave, there is incense and food. They seem to be traces of ceremonies.

This must be what Lalalila talked about.

Also, there were towers made of small rocks. They were piled up using pebbles the size of a palm.

There are writings in front of the towers.

Wishing for health, long life, happiness, eternal love...

It seems the towers were made by villagers, each of whom were praying for their small wishes.

I walked inside the cave.

The entrance is barely the size of a person's height. However, as I walked in further, it became bigger. Eventually, the ceiling was over four meters tall.

At the end of the tunnel, I saw the Great Mother.

The Great Mother is a giant fox. She is lying down, her body curled up in a ball.

I am not sure how many tails she had. However, I can see many tails behind her body.

Immediately after confirming her existence, I drew the sword from the sheath and spread mana.

It is time to smack the sleepyhead who ignored the ringing alarm clock.

Your back! Present your back, Great Mother!

[Welcome, human with a humorous name.]

What?

[Put your sword away. I am already awake.]

# Chapter 140 - Tutorial 19th Floor (9)

---

[I am already awake. Put your sword away, human.]

The Great Mother's voice is echoing inside my head.

However, I didn't put the sword away. I didn't stop the expansion of my mana either.

The Great Mother's gigantic body...

It is hard to believe that she was asleep until now. Unbelievable amounts of power are twitching inside her.

I can feel it so clearly.

Moreover, the mana that this Great Mother held was...

Literally overwhelming.

The amount, the purity...

Her high-density mana in the atmosphere around her and the mana sleeping inside her body are resonating with each other in real time.

I feel like I am being mesmerized just from observing this phenomenon quietly.

There is a limit to how much mana that one can pile up inside.

However, what if one can spread mana around the surrounding like her?

In doing so, she can manipulate even more mana than what would be possible through internal containment. She can have both the mana gathered inside her to the limit of her body and also the mana that is spread around her.

Normally, mana that's spread around the body dissipates quickly.

However, the Great Mother is holding the external mana in its place.

She is doing this through the mana resonance.

I wonder, what will I need to do to recreate this myself?

What kind of methods are hidden behind this?

This isn't about simply operating a larger amount of mana. There may also be a different method of utilizing it.

I am curious.

I want to clash with the Great Mother and learn about it.

[Human, put away your sword.]

The Great Mother's words are being absorbed into my head.

The voice is not through a physical voice.

It is a will conveyed through her mana.

[Is this how?]

When it comes to mana and conveying a will through the mana, I have already mastered it from the Master Monk.

I heard how to do it, and I had seen him do it several times as well, so I was able to mimic it right away.

In addition to that experience, I am now seeing the Great Mother using the method in a slightly different way. Now, I was able to get a clear feel for it.

It seems the diligent practice I had been doing all along was not wasted. I am able to perform the telecommunication right away.

[... I recognized it when you appeared in my dream of premonition. As I thought, you are no ordinary human.]

[I appeared in your dream?]

The Great Mother did not respond.

[I thought you can be awakened only through the ceremony?]

[Usually, that is the case, if it wasn't for the shock that was conveyed to me when the giant ghost was destroyed. It must be

you who is responsible for it, yes?]

I nod.

I wonder how she woke up without the ceremony. It seems she woke up because of the shock when the giant ghost was destroyed.

[Why didn't you undo the curse on Myong Myong although you are awake?]

[What are you talking about, human? I have undone all spells cast on my child as soon as I have woken up.]

Now that I think about it, ghosts did not appear around Myong Myong ever since the giant ghost was destroyed.

I thought it was just a respawn timer for new ghosts. It seems that it was actually because the curse was undone.

[It seems there is a misunderstanding. Put away your sword now, human.]

I didn't put my sword away.

[... Just why are you doing this to me?]

Instead, I took a step forward, sword in my hand.

[You fool! What are you expecting! No matter how strong you are for a human, do you think you can win against me! You will die without being able to hold out for even a moment!]

I think so too.

There definitely is that much of a difference in our caliber.

Still, I take a step forward.

[Such ridiculousness... Human, you are overflowing with pride and confidence. Please stop this!]

The tone of her words is rapidly changing.

[Treasures, I'll give you treasures! If not, I'll give you an elixir that will allow you to obtain even greater power!]

I stop stepping forward.

“I don’t really need treasures.”

I use my voice to say it instead in order to conserve mana, even if it is a small amount.

[In that case, I’ll give you the elixir! It’s a great one!]

I have one thing that I was curious about.

“Why are you trying to give me the elixir? As you said, you are probably far stronger than me. You just need to defeat me. Isn’t that right?”

The Great Mother is shriveling; to the point that I thought it is really weird.

She seems to want to avoid clashing with me so much that she was willing to offer me treasures and even the elixir.

Could it be related to the premonition that she mentioned earlier?

The Great Mother didn’t respond.

I took another step forward.

If we fight, I’ll definitely get broken to pieces.

In just one strike, I’ll be flattened like a pancake.

The Great Mother has the power to make it happen.

However, I cannot back down.

Since the difference in our physical sizes is overwhelming, I need to charge in as deeply as possible and fight.

I should dash in and aim for under the chin of the Great Mother.

The Great Mother, who is currently curled up in a ball, will get up and try to create distance.

What will come next would be probably her front leg or tail.

If not, she might respond and fight me using her magic.



In my head, I visualize each of the possible responses by the Great Mother and think about the next moves to match them.

There isn't even a need to use battle focus. My mental focus is sharpening to the extreme automatically.

My heartbeat is running wild.

My blood is boiling. My body is heating up.

My arms and legs are twitching because I wanted to charge in right away. Trying to calm them is hard enough as it was.

It has been so long.

I have not met a good opponent in a very long time.

I faced difficult and dangerous situations since I entered the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor's stage where I had to play alone. However, they never posed a real danger to me, except the Great Mother who was in front of me.

The differences in combat potentials are clear.

However, I cannot picture myself being defeated at the end of this battle.

Still, it is not like I have gone through battles where I was at a disadvantage only a few times.

Before the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor, I had fought such battles as if they were everyday thing.

Moreover, now, I am at the peak.

I have more than enough confidence to turn the tide of being in an overwhelming disadvantage.

[H... Human! I am proving the qualification for becoming the apostle of the God of Goodwill! Aren't you the same as well!? I can feel the trace of god from you!]

God of Goodwill.

That god is slightly related to me.

It is the god who is always feeling sorry for me.

[I'm being good and kind to become the apostle. Can't you understand me? We both wish to be apostles. Shouldn't we help each other?]

It seems that the Great Mother was going through the trial to become the God of Goodwill's apostle.

However, I am not sure. I am only interested in the power that I'll have after I become an apostle. I don't have a dream about becoming anyone's apostle.

I am not interested in being kind to someone who is trying to become an apostle either.

[God of Adventure is disappointed.]

I ignore the message from the god of fools and took another step forward.

I am within striking range.

I will dash in at the next step.

[I... If you truly think of my children as friends! Stop immediately! If I am hurt, then the children would be sad!]

Is that how you are going to go now...

The tense atmosphere was quenched cold as if a bucket load of cold water was thrown on it. It seems the Great Mother noticed this too. She only moved her eyes around and quietly confirmed my mood.

“Don't you think you are going too far with that?”

[However, it is still true. My children most definitely will be very sad if I get hurt.]

“... In that case, how about we have a very light duel? Light enough so that none of us would get hurt.”

[I don't want to. I'll definitely get hurt.]

Unexpectedly, the Great Mother has a shameless side.

Let alone a battle, she is refusing my request to use magic on me one-sidedly.

In the end, it is better to walk away after just getting the elixir.

I have everything I want, and no longer have anything else to do, so I will go back.

[I'll tell my children that the curse is now gone. You won't have to go find them to tell them about it in person.]

I am thankful for that.

The problem was resolved easily.

I thought the curse issue might take long, but it was already resolved. Not only that, as a bonus, I also got the elixir that will improve my abilities.

With lightened heart, I walk away from the cave. However, the Great Mother said, [Have a safe trip back, human with funny name. Never come back.]

I was not going to have any business to come back for. Still, for some odd reason, it is spoiling my mood.

When she is saying such things, I thought it would be odd for me to go back and ask what my name meant. So, I just walked out of the cave.

The outside is still dark.

In the night sky, there are still stars shining, along with a faint crescent moon hanging there.

However, there is something that was different.

After the sun fell, the village's fence, which was firmly shut, was now open wide.

Also, a small distance away from the opened fence, there are

beastmen gathered there.

I focus my eyes and watch them in detail.

There are over twenty beastmen there. They are hugging each other and pouring out tears.

Surrounding them are souls. Surrounding them in full, they were lighting the area like fireflies.

In middle of them, I could see a few familiar faces in the mix.

Myong Myong and Lalalila.

The Great Mother said that she will tell them that the curse was gone.

As soon as they heard from the Great Mother, it seems that Myong Myong ran toward the village while the beastmen from the village ran out of the village, eventually running into each other.

It is such a long distance from here, and it was dark as well. So, I cannot see them very well.

I cannot hear their voices either.

However, I could feel the warmth blooming from the distance.

I was about to move my legs again and walk toward them.

However, it looks like there is no need for me to butt in there.

The picture there, and the story there, was already complete.

Also, I am an outsider to the story.

Since I had to part ways with them, I thought it would be good for me to do so.

Instead of walking down the mound, I plummeted down at my seat.

After that, I looked up the night sky again.

It was a magnificent view. I can never get bored of watching it.

The moon of the night sky in Seoul was only faintly visible. The

night sky here is beyond comparison.

Looking at incredibly amazing night sky, I was reminded of an old question again.

Is this world really a manufactured world?

The trial of the 19<sup>th</sup> Floor was not simply guiding Myong Myong to the outside of the forest.

Within it all, there were Myong Myong's past and his circumstance.

There are also the culture and tradition of the tribe members. The guardian goddess called the Great Mother even predicted my appearance through her dream.

Is this really a world manufactured to test me?

My theory on my question was as following.

This world does exist.

It is from a time that existed in a world.

This trial is a fabrication based on the real events, and the real people involved in them are appearing in the trial.

There are other opinions in the community. However, that's what I have been thinking.

In that case, when this really happened in the real world for the first time, how did it end?

Did Myong Myong survive in the forest by himself until the curse ended?

If someone met Myong Myong in the forest, what would that person have chosen to do?

Would that person have been able to defeat the ghosts and bring Myong Myong to the village?

Also, would that person have led the story to a conclusion with

Myong Myong and Lalalila smiling and talking?

Would there be a new story after this ending?

What kind of tragedy would have followed in the AoAeo island that was addicted to the narcotic called Paramal...

I changed the subject from the stories in the beginning to the stories about me at the end.

How am I supposed to face the story's end?

It is a fabrication of what has already existed.

To put it simply, it is just an illusion.

An illusion of Myong Myong, an illusion of the beastmen village, and an illusion of the Great Mother and the illusion of the night sky...

Am I supposed to treat them as just fabrications?

I sigh.

Lately, I have been sighing frequently.

It is a bad habit.

Below the mound, there is a vast green field. It is extending to the beyond the horizon. Above it, I can see a magnificent night sky.

However, I feel confined, frustrated.

What's going to happen to Myong Myong now?

Once I leave this place through the portal and go to the waiting room, is this story going to end like this?

Also, is Myong Myong going back to being the frightened child in the forest and repeat this story forever with next challengers, while the memories of the time we shared forever lost?

All to be just a trial for the Tutorial's challengers?

At the moment, it is a question that I have no way of knowing the answer to. It is a problem that cannot be solved.

I dust myself and get up.

I took a moment to look at Myong Myong and then raised my hand.

On my finger is a ring made of flowers. It was the one that Myong Myong made for me.

I placed the flower ring on top of a stone tower.

After that, like how beastmen did, I prayed.

I prayed for Myong Myong's health and happiness.

"Teleport."

Since today's daylight time, the portal had been following around my feet. I activated the portal.

From the dark field, I was teleported to a bright field.

A bright voice that was as bright as the sunlight welcomed me.

"Hello! Human with a funny name! Ahhahathat."

Kiri Kiri is hiding her mouth with her hands and snickering.

When Myong Myong laughed like that, he was absolutely adorable. However, when Kiri Kiri did it, she could not look more mischievous.

\*

On top of an empty plate, I dropped a fork while making a clanking noise.

While I was eating the cake, Kiri Kiri was tagging onto me the whole time. Now that I finished the cake, she is finally getting off of me.

My mouth tastes sweet. To wash it off, I brought out a bottle of water from the inventory.

The taste of the cake is very satisfying.

How I felt became very satisfying as well.

In front of me was Kiri Kiri. She plummets onto the ground in a tantrum. She is kicking and struggling around in disappointment as if all is lost.

She is crying out a river. She is crying loudly like a child who just lost track of her mother.

I had no idea why she was so sad. With her face aimed toward the sky, there were tears flowing out endlessly from her face.

There was one more difference between Kiri Kiri and Myong Myong.

When I saw Myong Myong cry, I felt incredibly sad. However, when I saw Kiri Kiri cry, I could not feel more happier. I would not have missed it for the world.



# Chapter 141 - Tutorial 20th Floor (1)

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I wait while watching Kiri Kiri licking all the leftover cream from a plate.

The plate Kiri Kiri was licking is definitely not the empty plate I left after finishing the cake myself.

Of course not.

I am not that big of an asshole.

After I made Kiri Kiri to promise not to make fun of my name, I bought a whipped cream cake for Kiri Kiri.

I attempted to ask Kiri Kiri about the meaning of my name, but Kiri Kiri refused to tell me because apparently, it's a private matter.

"But hey, look, if it's my name then it's technically MY private matter, so then why can't I know about it?"

"Heheh, is that so."

Kiri Kiri smirks at me and avoids answering my question earnestly.

I snatch away the plate Kiri Kiri was licking.

"Ahhh. Give it back. Give it back!"

"Then will you answer properly?"

Kiri Kiri promised to answer earnestly this time, so I will give the plate back to Kiri Kiri..

But as soon as Kiri Kiri got the plate back, Kiri Kiri said such information is just not meant to be revealed yet, and went back to licking the almost-clean plate once again.

Alright I get it, any information regarding the private matters costs quite a lot.

So I'm going to just let this one go.

Right now, knowing the meaning of my name isn't that important anyways.

"Alright Kiri Kiri, about the 19th floor then."

Kiri Kiri is still busy licking the empty plate.

I breathe a sigh and purchase one lollipop.

"Kiri kiri, say, ah."

"Ah."

I shove a lollipop into Kiri Kiri's mouth while Kiri Kiri was saying Ah-.

And I snatch away the plate and place it in the inventory.

But since Kiri Kiri got driven away with a lollipop in its mouth, Kiri Kiri didn't seem to mind getting the plate taken away at all.

"I'm going to take that lollipop back if you dare to reply to my questions insincerely again"

"Okay. Okay."

Again, she answers with that careless tone of voice.

It was the usual, but today it was slightly worse than other days.

"So, about the 19th floor."

"Heh. I'd say it's better to be concerned about the upcoming floor rather than a floor you've already passed."

"Well, there will be other challenger trying for 19th floor next. So I need some information for them. Plus, I am quite curious myself as well."

Kiri Kiri smiled awkwardly, and began to talk.

"Let me guess, it's all because of that new accident that happened right after you cleared the 19th floor, right?"

I nodded.

It's very convenient to have an advisor who can read my mind.

“Well, even if you remove the curse, or even if you awake the God Mother, there will be absolutely no reward for that. This is completely normal, since the stage has already been cleared.”

“Then what was the point of those installations after the floor was cleared?”

“In order to observe what kind of decisions challenger would end up making even when there is no reward promised for him and to observe what type of movements he would make. It has nothing to do with stage clearing, but these are the things the Gods want to know more about. They want to see the choices challengers make, and want to see if those choices are reflective of their characteristics. They really want to know these things.”

I understand it now.

The reason why Gods oftentimes observe challengers and even gift them certain authorities is to persuade the challengers to become their apostles in the end.

So it would be great to have as many installations as possible to test challengers' characteristics.

There must have been some of those installations present in the past stages as well.

There must have been several installations hidden in each stage.

However for the 19th floor, they must have put the installation specifically to test how the challenger would react in a situation where there is no reward to be achieved.

“Unlike Hojae, other challengers do not get a chance to face giant ghost figures before arriving in the village. In fact, the appearance of giant ghost figures had been triggered much earlier than it should have been, all because you were defeating too many of them too quickly. Other challengers only needed to protect Myong Myong and hold up until the God Mother was awakened by the ritual. They can either do that, or they can decide to just run away

from them. Guarding Myong Myong with their lives without any promised reward for a long, long time without knowing when it would even end; now that's the objective for after the stage clear."

"So that was the objective for that stage. I knew it; it was way too easy."

"Eh?"

"Yeah?"

"Eh?"

"What"

"Well 19th floor was not an easy stage, at all"

Is that so.

It was way easier compared to 17th and 18th floor.

"That's only because Hojae made the 18th floor much more difficult. And you just immediately passed the 17th floor!"

Well, now that I think about it, Kiri Kiri's words make sense.

If there were any challenger who passed 17th floor before me, the difficulty level he faced must have been much lower than the difficulty level Lee Hyung-Jin will have to face in the future.

"Um.... Then let's talk about Myoung Myoung on the 19th floor...."

Once I started the sentence, my mind went completely blank and I forgot what I was going to say next.

"Are there any more questions regarding the 19th floor?"

Kiri Kiri's question perplexed me.

I didn't really have any questions left; nothing that popped up in my head.

I had no questions regarding the stage clearing strategies either.

"Well."

“I see, you just want to chat more huh?”

I’ve already said it once, but I will have to say it twice.

It is very convenient to have an advisor who reads minds.

“Yeah. I guess.”

I admitted it.

I want to talk more about Myong Myong and Lala Lila and other people.

I want to know more about them, even though I’ve already passed them, even though they may not be significant to me at all anymore.

With chocolate cookie and milk laid out on the floor, I chatted with Kiri Kiri for a long while.

“It’s not weird at all that you are unable to control the souls by soul collection skill. It’s because soul collection is literally a skill to collect souls. In order to persuade souls, you need to ask them politely, instead of giving them some sort of orders to do certain things for you.”

Is that how it is.

Then what, do I need to perform some sort of ancestral ritual with pig’s blood?

“Actually that’s not a bad idea at all.”

Would that really work....

“Or you will have to do something to help release the souls’ sorrow, or gift them something they really like, or do something they like....”

After listening to Kiri Kiri’s explanation, I have to give up my original plan of actively manipulating the souls completely.

I can’t really be bothered to behave like their little slave, just to be able to control some tiny little ghosts which are only good for

uselessly screaming things like Kyah-and Oooh-.

“Well if you get to establish deeper friendships with them, they would grow as big as the size of your hand.”

“They’d still be hard to use still. Oh well....”

I wanted to skip to next question, but Kiri Kiri stopped me.

“Wait!”

Kiri Kiri raised one hand firmly and gestured ‘stop’ just like traffic police officer, and said.

“There isn’t much quota left now. I will only receive two more important questions.”

This is the third time I have to say it today; it really is pretty damn convenient to have an advisor who can read my mind.

Kiri Kiri knew what question I would be asking next, and decided to tell me to filter them out and only ask the important ones.

“Ahem.”

Kiri Kiri put her chin up, and widened her shoulder.

“Then I would like to ask about the level up rewards. How come there are no more level up rewards, all of a sudden?”

The stats and skill level that we receive as level up rewards have been decreasing from one point, and now there are no rewards given for leveling up at all.

A level up reward was one of the ways to improve stats and skills conveniently along with stage clear rewards. Hence, it was a major issue that there is no more level up reward.

This is my current status screen.

[Lee Ho-Jae (Human)]

Lv. 40

Power : 40

Agility : 58

Health : 41

Magic : 41

Skills : Battle Concentration Lv.20 Will Power Lv.14 Arousal LV.2 Prediction Lv.9 Insight Lv.5 Race Lv.8 Covertness Lv.14 Meditation Lv.12 Detection Lv.7 Chase Lv.13 Natural Healing Lv.12 Revival Lv.5 Strengthening of sensation Lv.14 Sensation Explosion Lv.8 Energy Lv.6 Expansion of Vision Lv.4 Metal Wall Lv.2 Somatosclerosis Lv.3 Shouting of soul Lv.3 Advanced Sword Skill Lv.6 Advanced Shielding Skill Lv.2 Basic Spear Skill Lv. 8 Advanced Desmoplasty Lv.2 Basic Trapezoidectomy Lv.6 Basic Cooking Lv.6 Magical circuit Lv.16 Malice Lv.7 Wind Spirit's Blessing Lv. 5 Spirit Friendliness Lv. 2 Knowledge before Babel Time Lv. 6 Collection of Soul Lv. 9 Immune to Mental Pollution Lv. 5 Tolerance for pain Lv.3 Tolerance for bleeding. Lv. 10 Tolerance for fainting Lv.6 Tolerance for Penetration Lv.4 Tolerance for Poison Lv. 3 Tolerance for Paralysis Lv. 15 Tolerance for Fire Lv. 1 Tolerance for Cold LV. 4 Tolerance for freezing Lv. 3 Tolerance against Curse Lv. 7 Tolerance against rich magic Lv. 6 Tolerance for Nephrogenesis LV. 1 Invincibility Lv. 4 Structure Lv. 2 Ignite of Boju Lv. Max Talaria's Wings Lv. Max Collection of soul Lv. Max Lion Summoning Lv. ???

Others: God of slow has been watching you with great attention.

Ordeal from God of Slow [Achievement: 6/11]

Ordeal from God of Adventure [Achievement: 170/224]

Through training and practicing, I gained strategies to assist my improvement of skills, and which was why I was able to strengthen several skills very quickly.

However, I am unable to strengthen every single one of my skills in such short time.

There are still few skills I haven't really touched on, since it was

difficult to strengthen those skills only by repetitive practices.

That's why I needed the level up rewards: in order to strengthen those skills which I haven't really been able to touch on quite yet.

"I will explain it briefly this time."

Kiri Kiri usually shortens the sentences when she talks about expensive information.

Kiri Kiri explained to me previously that it is so to provide me as much information while using keywords, which uses the limited amount of allowed quota more efficiently.

"They are not completely gone. It's just that your improvement has already caught up with the systems' physical layout. But there is no need to feel sad about it. Because it also means that you have already received everything you could possibly receive on your current level. Now you just need to obtain your current status before reaching the next standard, Level 51."

"Alright, so it means that I won't be getting any level up rewards before reaching the level 51. Then can I receive them after level 51?"

Kiri Kiri scratched her chin, and pondered.

"In a normal case, yes. When you reached over level 51, you will receive level up rewards ONLY if your standards don't exceed the next standard line"

The next standard line.

51th level was the first line, so I think the next line must be 101th level.

It is kind of impossible for me to estimate what improvements in my status would happen by that time.

"Alright. Then next question, I need advice on the 20th floor"

After awfully struggling on the 18th floor, I have decided that it'd be a good idea to listen to Kiri Kiri's advice on the next floors.



Even though I am successfully clearing the stages without confronting any critical danger, there is a huge difference between able to be aware of types of traps that are waiting on the next stage, compared to having absolutely no information at all.

“Even for Hojae, this stage will be quite challenging.”

“Oh, really?”

My heart begun to race faster as soon as I heard the word ‘hard’.

“Because the next stage requires a party play. Maximum 6 players.”

Ohhh!

Oh Oh!

My racing heart has begun to pound harder.

As if my heart was doused in oil, my expectation for 20th floor blew up instantly.

It is a first stage that requires a party play since the 11th floor.

Have I improved enough?

Would I be stuck just like I was on the 6th floor, or would I be able to overcome the barrier? I really can’t control my excitement.

“Heh....I wasn’t expecting this kind of reaction.”

Kiri Kiri awkwardly smiled.

“My advice for 20th floor is to watch your back. It is not a stage that messes with your head, so don’t worry. And I think it’s time to drink some potions.

[Welcome to the waiting room of the 20th floor.]

I take the potions out of the inventory and lay them out on the floor as Kiri Kiri advised me to.

Potions that I’ve received from Juji, potions that I’ve received as rewards from various competitions, and the potions I’ve received

from the God Mother are laid out in front of me.

Now that I lay it all out, there are quite a lot of potions that I've collected so far.

I am debating between whether I should drink all these potions now immediately, or later on after processing the situation.

I was in such agony for a short while, but then I finally decided to postpone the potions drinking to later.

It may be possible to clear the 20th floor without drinking any potions anyways.

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : Yo. Are you alive? Why haven't you texted me?]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 20th floor : Of course I'm alive.]

I received Kim Min-Hyuk's first text in awhile.

The busy schedules in the beginning of each stage must have passed.

We chatted for awhile, since we haven't caught up with each other for such a long time.

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : Min has entered the 89th floor.]

Park Min, an Easy level challenger.

Besides Lee Chan-Yong who is dead now, Park Min is the challenger who has reached the highest floor.

Park Min has entered the 89th floor, which Lee Chan-Yon was stuck on.

The 89th floor is an easy level stage that has nothing to do with me; however it felt strangely relevant to me.

There is a resemblance between myself who was stuck on the 6th floor and Lee Chan-Young who was daunted on the 89th floor.

I truly feel sorry for him.

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : I am worried. Will everybody be okay?]

[Lee Ho-Jae, 20th floor : Everybody will do great. I hope they will. Please tell them to do well. I'm going to enter the stage now.]

[Kim Min-Hyuk, 30th floor : Okay. Text me later.]

After wishing Park-Min a good luck, I began my new challenge as well.

“Move.”

[Welcome to the 20th stage]

# Chapter 142 - Tutorial 20th Floor (2)

---

[Member(s) available for party recruitment (1/1)]

- Lee Ho Jae

[Current Party Member (1/6)]

1. Lee Ho Jae

[Would you like to enter?]

Before entering the 20th stage which requires a 6 man party, a message popped up to confirm my decision once again.

“Yes.”

Why do they even bother to ask? It’s just me anyways.

Actually, the decision confirmation message pops up before entering any stage.

However, I feel strangely chagrined when I see a confirmation message before entering a stage that requires a party play.

It’s humiliating.

Oh well, but I guess it’s okay since it’s been awhile anyways.

[Welcome to the 20th floor stage.]

[Trial number 19, Date 16th, Time 15:00]

I entered the 20th stage right at 3 o’ clock.

The 20th stage is located at the top of the castle fortress, which was built on top of the mountain.

Recently, stages have been located in areas with fantastic views of natural landscapes.

First of all, this fortress is magnificent.

This fortress contains very firm and tall walls.

And this fortress reminds me of those unrealistic fortresses

which are likely to appear in fantasy movies like Lord of the Rings, rather than any actual existing fortresses built on Earth.

Actually, never mind, there wouldn't be any giant fortress built on top of the mountain like this, even in Lord of the Rings.

Who are they kidding? Logically speaking, how can anybody be able to build any castle on top of such high mountain like this?

However, that sort of nonsensical building exists right here.

I don't have any knowledge regarding war strategies or sieges. However, I am able to assume that this fortress was built in order to fight against larger number of enemies easily, even with smaller number of allied forces.

The enemies could easily die climbing the steep mountain, they could die from getting hit by weapons flying around, or they could easily die from stumbling and falling down.

Even if you somehow successfully make your way up until you reach a castle wall, the wall is too high to climb up.

Unless you have the ability to fly, it seems impossible to be able to conquer this fortress with only ground forces.

Second of all, my location is very important.

If I were summoned anywhere near the fortress, then the 20th floor clear objective might have been conquering the fortress.

But I was summoned on top of the fortress wall.

A message popped up.

[The 20th floor gateway begins.]

Explanation: The red mountain where the great Go-Ryoung had lived for a long, long time, no longer has a master.

All that is left in this red mountain is the dwarfs protecting the great Go-Ryoung's only inheritance.

The Trilogy alliance wants to take possession of the great Go-

Ryoung's inheritance, in order to gain an advantage over the empire in the war.

However, all thanks to a long-lasting ill-fated relationship between the dwarfs and the Trilogy alliance, the Trilogy alliance decided to attack the fortress and plunder great Go-Ryoung's inheritance instead of convincing the dwarfs to hand it over.

Help the dwarfs and protect Go-Ryoung's inheritance.

The Trilogy alliance's attack will start on the day 2.

[Condition of Stage Clear]

1. Defend Trilogy alliance's attack for 11 days.

2. Protect Go-Ryoung's inheritance from Trilogy alliance.

It's a simple stage.

I like it very much.

Yes, this is it.

This is what every tutorial stage should be.

I activated my magic power to skim through the fortress and its surroundings.

There are no enemies approaching toward the fortress yet.

There are none that could get away without me noticing it, at least.

Then first I shall begin to chat at ease.

I turn my head to the sound of footsteps coming from behind.

It's one of the dwarfs who have been watching me for a while now.

Other dwarfs have been looking at me from far away, yet only one among them walk toward me.

When I first heard the name 'dwarf', I was somewhat imagining a species like hobbits or halflings that appear in fantasy novels.

However, the dwarfs in front of my eyes had something different compared to that of my imagination.

“H.”

“H?”

“...E.”

“What?”

First of all, they are a bit strange.

“...L.”

“....”

“...LO.”

...If I put together all those slowly mumbled words, it becomes ‘Hello’.

The fact that they have successfully spoken a word, even when they only obtain language skill from before the Babel time was truly impressive, more so than the fact that such species that speaks like this exists.

“You....”

“Yes, me what.”

“Too....”

God damn it. They are weirder than I thought.

It’s not only that they speak in such weird manner.

It’s also that, the dwarf who was speaking in front of me, and all the other dwarfs in my sight share one trait.

They all look exactly the same.

As if they were all identical twins.

And there are more than hundreds of dwarfs in front of my eyes right now.

They can't possibly be all identical twins.

"H...."

I figured it would be at least twenty times more efficient to zone out than to listen carefully to each word they speak slowly.

Not only were their facial appearances identical, but their physical frames were also identical, as if they were some sort of artificial life forms that have been cloned.

To be honest I feel uncomfortable.

I activated my magical power, and observe dwarfs' bodies more carefully.

It was a huge discourtesy; however they don't seem to be offended by it at all.

After a while, I drew a conclusion.

They are all the same person.

Whether they are all one's alter ego, or an artificial robot, or some sort of doll or I don't know what exactly.

Maybe it has something to do with that great Go-Ryoung.

When my train of thought reached that point, the dwarf standing in front of me had spoken quite a lot of words.

When I put all those words together, it becomes the following sentence.

'I am fine. You are fine as well. You speak. Speak about your relationship with Trilogy.'

I couldn't be sure if whether the simplicity of the sentence structure was due to their lack of intellectual capacity, or if it was in order to save some time since they spoke terribly badly.

"I am... Trilogy's...."

"Fas...."



I was speaking in the same manner as the dwarfs, slowly but obviously faster than them, but one dwarf cut me off.

I stopped speaking to listen to him in order to see what sort of important message he was trying to tell me.

“Ter....”

Faster?

“Spe...”

Faster Spe?

“Ak...”

...They are telling me to speak faster.

Well, shit...

Sigh. I will let this one go.

There may be some valid reason behind why they speak so slowly like that anyways.

I decided to speak faster as they've wished.

“I am not connected to Trilogy alli-.”

“if....”

“...I am not connected to Trilogy alliance, and I am their enemy.”

“it's...”

God damn it.

They not only have problems in speaking but also in hearing.

Either that or they had some sort of obsessive-compulsive disorder about completing the sentence that has already begun.

“Oh....”

I feel like something is burning inside of me.

Wow, my mental contamination immunity skill level might advance if I continue to listen to this.

“Kay....”

Okay my ass.

“I am irreverent to Trilogy alliance, and I am their enemy. I will help defend against their attack, and I will protect the inheritance of the great Go-Ryoung.”

I was planning to furtively ask about the inheritance of Go-Ryoung after establishing a deeper friendship with the dwarfs.

If the dwarfs were planning on hiding the existence of the inheritance or something, then there is a chance of my relationship with them going awry.

But because I felt awfully cramped in having this conversation with the dwarfs, I ended up spilling everything I had to say at once.

“T....”

The dwarf began to reply.

I zoned out again, while listening to his reply that will obviously take a long, long time again.

Yet I have no problem understanding his reply at all.

The objective of the 20th floor stage is to protect the Go-Ryoung’s inheritance that the dwarves have been protecting against the Trilogy alliance.

I considered the 20th floor stage to be perfectly doable when I learned about the existence of the allies and when I looked at the tall fortress build on top of the mountain.

Of course I still have no idea what the Trilogy alliance is like, not yet.

Therefore I thought it would be okay to engage in this stage without having to drink any potions.

That was my hasty judgment.

I would be much better off drinking potions to carry this whole

thing alone by myself, rather than trusting these little things as my allies.

When my thought process reached until this point, the dwarf had made quite some progress.

‘Trilogy’s enemy, our friend’

It must mean that the Trilogy’s enemy is their friend.

Since the dwarf didn’t finish his sentence yet, I continued to think about other things.

I will ask them to show me the inheritance of Go-Ryoung as soon as this conversation is over.

After knowing the location of the inheritance and structure of the fortress I shall make a basic defensive plan.

Fortunately the dwarfs don’t seem to have any problems in moving, even though they had some obvious deficiency in communication.

It would be possible to defend to some extent even if they only roll down several stones and rocks from the top of the wall while I fight the Trilogy alliance at the front lines.

In the meantime I really have to drink and absorb the potions.

The plan was neat.

However I had doubts about the feasibility of the plan.

They said that the Trilogy alliance’s attack will begin on the day 2.

I was wondering why their attack would begin on the 2nd day, rather than on the first day of stage entrance, but now I know why.

There was no guarantee that I would be able to completely finish conversing with the dwarfs and drink the potions before today is over.

It will take up an entire evening just to talk about Go-Ryoung’s

inheritance and to have a look around the fortress.

Hah.

A sigh slipped out of my mouth.

If I combine the words that dwarf said up to this point, it becomes a sentence like this.

‘Trilogy’s enemy, is our friend. Let’s protect the great Go-Ryoung’s inheritance together. We welcome your vi.’”

They must mean that they welcome my visit.

Convincing the dwarfs was way easier than I thought it would be.

Honestly speaking, I have no clue about why the dwarfs got convinced so easily.

I think it’s only logical to be on guard when you see a stranger who appeared in fortress out of nowhere all of a sudden in a sensitive time like this.

Or maybe they are letting it pass without thinking much, simply because they are too dumb.

A man appeared in fortress in the right timing because of the Tutorial’s stage. Maybe they are programmed to maintain an amicable relationship with the challengers.

If that’s not the case, maybe they have discovered something in me that was trustworthy enough, or they have a substantial clue to be assured that I am not part of Trilogy’s alliance.

And if that’s not the case either, maybe they’re pretending to accept it while planning on stabbing me in the back afterwards.

There are several possibilities.

But for now I lack information regarding the relationship between dwarfs and Trilogy alliance.

Let’s come back to this later.

Things went smoother than I thought it would.

By things, I meant the conversation with the dwarfs.

The dwarfs who welcomed me had stopped talking.

That was a very positive piece of news.

They handed me a bundle of paper instead.

The bundle of paper consisted of a map of surrounding areas and an operational plan in preparation for siege warfare.

The map contained a detailed presentation of the geographic features of the fortress itself and its surrounding areas.

It even contained the location of the Trinity Alliance's camp.

The operational plan explained their organization of forces and structure of the fortress and how to utilize its defensive facilities.

I would have to analyze how they'd be able to defend themselves against the enemy's attack based on this operational plan, and then I would have to assign myself an appropriate role.

They ushered me into a small room inside the fortress after checking those bundles of paper.

The dwarfs led me into the room and told me to use it as my lodging, then disappeared after telling me that they would come pick me up before the dinner time.

Thankfully the dwarfs weren't dumb in the head.

There is a great barrier in communication, but they were acknowledging it themselves, and they were even trying to make up for their defect with other methods.

I must say, it is a very positive thing.

Well, then.

My task from now on is to read the map and operational plan

once again very carefully, and to obtain any necessary information, in addition to organizing all the questions I want to ask the dwarfs before the dinner time, and to assign myself an appropriate role for the war that will begin tomorrow.

And last but not least, I need to drink some potions.

That's about it for now.

The first thing for me to do is to drink some potions.

I activated my magical power and activated detection skill.

I sensed a few existences around me, but they weren't close enough to be threatening.

[Collection of Soul]

[Number of Soul Collected : 211659]

I summon thirty souls.

[Kyaak-]

"Hey. Shush."

Even though one's scream was only as noisy as a kitten's purring, when thirty of them begin to scream at the same time it becomes very tumultuous.

"Sorry to ask, but could you possibly protect the environs of this room? Guard against anyone coming inside."

Of course they didn't even bother to listen to my words.

"Alright, then how about just protecting the front door?"

Rather than listening to me, the souls were trying to find something while roaming around me.

I know what that behavior indicates.

They are looking for Myong Myong, who is supposed to be nearby me.

Unfortunately, they won't get to meet Myong Myong around me

anymore.

I even pulled out a candle, sundae (pig's gut), liver and etc. from the inventory and tried praying to them, but they still refused to follow my words at all.

In the end, I gave up and sent the souls back.

I wanted to have more definite security, even though my surroundings were pretty safe, and there is no reason for the dwarfs to be hostile at me.

Because it becomes awfully troublesome if someone were to attack me while I am absorbing potions.

Potion that can force the enhancement of the stat is not a simple nutritional supplement.

Outstanding magic circulation skills and intense concentration is required in order to wholly absorb its entire efficacy.

Even if a marauder were to appear, I can still stop absorbing the potion and deal with them, but that would decrease the efficacy of the potion.

But rather than any attack, the dwarfs' simple visit to say hello would be more unbearable, because I would have to forcefully stop the absorption and stand up.

Even if I don't stand up, I need to open my mouth at least in order to turn the visitor away.

There is only one thing that can secure my safety at this point.

[Summon Soul]

An uncomfortable magical spell swirled up in the room, and a healthy lizard over 2 meters tall was summoned into this tiny room.

With a long spear on its back and a tail that was thicker than my

thighs, it made this small room feel even smaller than it already is.

However I was delighted rather than discomforted by it.

Honestly speaking, I was waiting for the right moment to use my soul summoning skill.

For the pretext for using the skill, to be exact.

“Long time no see, Iddy.”

“Kerk. To be honest I have no idea how much time has passed since the last time we saw each other. But hey, long time no see, hubby.”



## Chapter 143 - Tutorial 20th Floor (3)

---

After looking around and securing the safety, Iddy said hi.

“Kerk. Long time no see, hubby.”

“I told you not to call me hubby.”

“Kerk, Kerk. I see that you are finally ready to accept me, now that you have summoned me in this tiny room. Thankfully, the bed is large enough. Do you prefer a son or a daughter?”

Instead of going along with Iddy’s word, I aimed for Iddy’s head with Thousand Arms.

Iddy tilted her head, and easily avoided my attack.

“Kerk. Commander, you are still such a shy boy.”

Iddy laughed momentarily, and asked me.

“Commander, is this place safe?”

“For now yes. It’s an ally’s base. Can’t be completely sure yet though.”

“I see. Well, if you have time, I would appreciate a detailed explanation of the situation. Kerk.”

I explained the situation in great detail, as Iddy requested, about detailed setting of this stage and the objective I had to accomplish.

“Do you know about the dwarfs by any chance?”

“Kerk. Dwarf is a broad term any short humanlike race. Are there any other particularly special features?”

Of course, there is one extremely particularly special feature.

I told Iddy about a particular feature of the dwarfs I’ve met.

“Kerk. Kerk. We will end up meeting the breed that is normally very hard to find.”

“You know about those dwarfs?”

“Of course. Kerk. First of all, you mustn’t call them dwarfs in front of them.”

“Yeah? Then what should I call them?”

“Dragon Soldiers.”

Dragon Soldiers?

The dragon soldiers I was familiar with are definitely not one of those dwarfs with speech impediments.

It’s awfully different to what I’ve imagined in my head.

When I told her of my impression, Iddy laughed once again.

“Of course. Dragon soldiers are a great being in its existence itself. There is no way that they would be called the dwarfs.”

Then what the heck are they?

“They are not exactly dragon soldiers, but dragon soldier wannabes?”

“Correct. Essentially, they share identical process of birth with dragon soldiers. Same creator too. Of course they’re only identical in a way that a lizard man and a crow both come out of eggs.”

“Hmm...Then what are they called usually? Ah, like when they are not listening.”

“You said it yourself. They are called the dwarfs.”

Iddy said that “dwarf” is a broad term to indicate any short humanlike race.

So I guess that means those dwarfs don’t even have an exact title for identifying themselves.

Except for the title of ‘dragon soldier,’ which is only used by them.

“Kerk. They are naturally created to serve the dragon. It’s just like one of those electronic cleaning machines or laundry machines that you’ve told me about once in the past.”

[PR Note: I think what the author means is that they are born into serving the dragon race.]

I guess he meant the vacuum cleaner or the washing machine.

I've briefly explained modern civilization once; it was a while ago when I was living in the cave with Iddy on the 12th floor.

Especially the ones related to housework.

"Then they must be pretty damn useless in battle."

"Obviously. Kerk."

I really have to drink the potions, for real now.

I announced my intention and asked Iddy to protect the room while I'm absorbing the potion.

"Kerk. Got it. But hey, if you planned such a thing, wouldn't it have been better if you drank it somewhere safer before coming here?"

I silently rolled my eyes.

I didn't know what to say.

"Kerk. Kerk. You've become such a softie, Commander."

I had to agree with her.

Instead of giving some nonsensical excuse, I admitted it.

I have become such a softie; I've become too complacent.

It takes me longer to make a decision when I need to, and those calls are not as good as they used to be.

Even I am aware of it.

I've spent my afternoon absorbing the potions nonstop and familiarize myself with the new buffs.

"Kerk. Are we finished now?"

"No, not quite yet. Even though I've finished absorbing its power, my body still needs some time. I will be able to adjust the

effects by the time the battle starts tomorrow.”

“Kerk. Wouldn’t it be much better to just completely finish everything before the battle begins?”

“My ability of merit dramatically increases in crisis.”

“Kerk. Kerk.”

Iddy laughed wildly.

Well, what can I do; it’s the truth.

While I was chatting with Iddy in the room, one of the dwarfs opened the door and came in.

Do they not know how to knock?

The dwarf eyes were about to pop out when he saw Iddy, but he started to say something regardless.

“Li.....”

Ah, here it comes again.

“Zar....”

Eddie didn’t even bother to let the dwarf finish his sentence and began to reply.

“Kerk. That’s right. I am a lizard man. I didn’t sneak in; this commander here has summoned me, so don’t you worry.”

“D....”

“I am also very pleased to meet one of dragon’s descendants. Oh, it’s dinner time already.”

“Man.....”

What the heck is happening?

“Iddy, is it really okay to rumble by yourself like that?”

“Kerk. Kerk. I knew it, you are not really able to understand their words because you don’t have the interpretation skill. Kerk. It’s hard to explain.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“It....”

“Their first and second syllables usually contain most of the meaning.”

“Is....”

Huh?

“So....does that mean that when he mumbled “Li” at first, it contained the meaning of ‘Oh, it is a Lizard man. What are you doing here? How did you enter here?’”

Iddy affirmed my thoughts.

“That’s correct. Kerk. And the words that come next are usually meaningless ramblings.”

“Din....”

Can someone turn this radio off from rambling!

The slow words the dwarf threw here and there in the middle of my conversation with Iddy were getting on my nerves.

“So the first syllabus contains all the meaning, and the rest has no meaning at all, but I’ve been interpreting it incorrectly by putting all the syllables together to form one sentence?”

“Ner....”

“That’s correct. You understand things very quickly, commander. Kerk. Kerk.”

“But how come they use such inefficient way of speaking?”

“Me....”

“The language of dragons usually functions like that.”

“The language of dragons...I see....they copy the language of dragons.”

Now it’s completely understandable why the ‘knowledge before

the time of Babel' skill is unable to interpret the dragon language properly and got confused instead.

I am not sure if it's due to my low skill level concerning the knowledge before Babel time, or if it's due to the limitation of the skill itself. Despite its fancy name, it is actually completely impractical at all.

First of all, it's unable to understand language of Lune, which is considered a very basic language of magic, and there were lots of words among ancient languages that 16th floor castle guard was saying that I couldn't quite guess the meaning.

I was unable to interpret any dialect or slang the guard was using in the conversation.

“Al....”

“Then, how come you are able to understand them?”

“Kerk. I am a Lizard man. Of course I know some basics of dragon language.”

Alright, I see some relevance here.

Dragon or Lizard man or Lizard... Well they're all similar to each other so it makes sense.

“Is....”

“Commander, do you know the location of the dining room?”

I nodded.

I've confirmed the location of the dining room on the fortress' internal map.

“Then, let's head to the dining room. They say the dinner is ready and they're waiting for you.”

“Rea....”

So that's what the dwarf has been constantly babbling about.

“Sure. Let's go.”

We got out of the room to head toward the dining room, while the dwarf followed us from behind.

“Dy....”

Of course he didn’t forget to continue rambling.

If there is a language hell on earth, this place is it.

Any linguists with their right minds will agree with me; there are no doubts about that.

The big dining room where about two hundreds of dwarfs were dining was literally chaos.

“Li....Za....”

“By....”

“Rd....Man....”

“The....”

“Long.....Time.....No....”

“Way....”

A bunch of them were speaking like that in the same place at the same time, and I couldn’t understand any of their ramblings.

Even worse, a few of them were babbling inconsistently while eating, I had no clue of what they were trying to say.

So I gave up trying to have a conversation, and let Iddy take care of it, while I only focused on my meal.

Dwarfs’ food consisted mainly of vegetables.

It wasn’t tasty.

“Wouldn’t dragons get upset if this kind of food was being served to them?”

I whispered to Iddy’s ear while she was chatting with the dwarfs.

Just in case the dwarfs gets angry by hearing this.

“Kerk. Dragon doesn’t eat food. I heard there’s no problem even if they don’t ingest any food.”

Having no problems without eating food is different from being unable to eat.

I bet the dragon refuses to eat it, since they serve this kind of food.

I didn’t say it out loud, not even to Iddy.

Just in case the dwarf overhear, since there’s a high chance they’ll get very angry.

“Kerk. And they have decided to show us the inheritance of Go-Ryoung, after we finish our meal.”

“Oh, Yes. Good to hear.”

“And I’ve told them that you absolutely love today’s dinner very much.”

That was such an unnecessary thing to do.

“They were asking me what was wrong, since you were menacingly scowling, so I told them you usually make that kind of face when you eat delicious food.”

Damn....

I had nothing to say to that, since it was my fault for making such a facial expression while they served the food in the first place.

After finishing dinner, we followed the dwarfs to check out the inheritance of Go-Ryoung.

Since all the dwarfs looked identical, I couldn’t tell the difference between one and another, but the one who is leading us right now is apparently the one who chatted with me this morning.

Well, I had nothing to comment on that really.

“That....”

The dwarf started to babble about something again, but I didn’t



have to be bothered to care since Iddy could take care of it.

Even the dwarfs seem to feel more comfortable communicating with Iddy instead of me.

I see that it has been a fabulous decision to summon Iddy; thanks to her, interpreting has become so much easier.

When I told her this, Iddy scolded at me.

“Kerk. You finally find the justification for summoning me, just now?”

Oh well.

I was surprised by her reaction, which was sharper than I expected.

“Kerk. Kerk. I like you but you are too slow-witted.”

Just like how she said how I’m slow witted, I couldn’t figure out why I felt offended by her words.

So I just kept my mouth shut, unable to say anything.

We reached the back side of the fortress after walking silently for awhile.

There was a small hall hidden behind the castle wall.

There was a necklace floating in the air in the middle of the empty hall.

Is that some sort of ancient sorcery?

“That must be the inheritance from the dragon?”

“Kerk. It seems like it. They say they cannot reveal the detailed history behind that necklace though.”

I don’t think it matters that much to know the effects or the necklace’s worth anyways.

I only need to protect it from Trilogy alliance.

“Then, Iddy, could you ask them if you could stay here and

protect the necklace?”

“Me? Wouldn’t it be better if I fight at the front lines?”

“No, because I was informed to watch my back. Our priority is protecting that necklace. Since there is a possibility of marauders coming from the back side, I want you to protect it.”

The dwarfs readily approved of it.

They said, besides Iddy, they would place bunch of other dwarfs there to strengthen its defenses.

Of course, Iddy translated their words for me.

After finishing the tasks that for the day, I returned to my lodging.

I sat on the edge of my bed, and organized my thoughts.

There was nothing that seemed unstable, or which seemed like a trap.

The defense plan was very thorough, and there was no discord with the dwarfs.

This stage seems to purely be a stage where I defend an object.

However, I thought the fact that the dwarfs have been showing such complete trust toward me and Iddy were a little odd.

I mean, Iddy can be persuasive since she is related to them in terms of genealogy, but it was a bit suspicious that they trusted me so easily.

“What’s your thought on this?”

“Kerk. I don’t know. To be honest how should I know what kind of people the dwarfs of dragon are? I only know that they are dragon soldier wannabes, and that they refuse to accept what they were assigned at birth to become. Moreover, since I have no knowledge about the Trilogy alliance, I won’t be able to suspect anything.”

“I see.”

“Just don’t lower your guard, and let’s collect more information. Kerk. When the battle begins tomorrow, we’ll be able to figure something out after knowing more about the Trilogy.”

In the end, Iddy offered the exact same conclusion as the one I drew in the morning by myself.

Even though it was a same conclusion, somehow Eddie’s words gave me more confidence.

I felt relieved.

I spent the night chatting about things with Iddy, instead of getting a good night’s sleep.

Iddy and I are both unable to sleep easily in places where our safety isn’t guaranteed.

We chatted mostly about what happened to me during my journey from the 13th floor to the 20th floor, after we had our farewells.

While I was Iddy telling stories, I got to uncover some thoughts I was unaware of.

While Iddy listened to me, she often complimented me, or she quietly comforted me.

Iddy makes me feel like I’m home.

# Chapter 144 - Tutorial 20th Floor (4)

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[Trial 19th, Date 17, Time 10:10]

The second day's morning sun has just risen.

I've just spent the whole entire night chatting with Idy all night long; we ended up watching the sunrise through the window this morning.

We had a simple breakfast in our room.

Of course, Idy didn't cook; we just ate whatever leftover food I could find in my inventory.

It tasted way better than the shitty food the dwarfs served us last night anyway.

And I could enjoy the food even more this time since I could eat it in a quiet room with Idy, rather than in a noisy dining room full of dwarfs babbling endlessly.

Minutes after we just finished our breakfast, one of the dwarfs entered the room.

“Cas....”

“They are watching the Trilogy's advance from the castle wall. We better go now, commander.”

“Alright, let's go.”

Just like message said, on the second day morning, the Trilogy finally showed themselves as they approached the castle to attack.

I went to the fortress wall with Idy to take a look.

The dwarfs were all lined up by the castle's battlements.

I could see quite an enormous number of dwarfs; there were more than I thought there were.

It seems like there are at least five hundred of them.

Idy started a conversation with a dwarf in a commander uniform, and while they were talking, I took a look down the castle wall.

There was nothing down there.

I even activated my magic power, but I couldn't sense a single enemy standing nearby.

Idy had just finished the conversation with the dwarf as she made her way towards me.

"There is nothing! And it doesn't seem like anyone is hiding at all either," I said to Idy.

"Keruk. Keruk. Commander, you're looking at the wrong place. Of course they're not near the castle wall. Right there, take a look there."

Idy pointed to a flat field in the valleys.

The field was filled with... something.

When I looked more carefully, I began to realize that what I thought was just a plain flat field was in fact slowly inching forward, little by little.

Since it was very far away from where we were and it occupied such a large area, I misperceived it to be just a normal, flat field.

There were two good things about this.

"Well, at least it will take them quite a long time until they finally reach up here."

This fortress was built on the peak of an extremely high mountain.

They will take at least one or two hours for them to climb up the steep terrain.

"Keruk. It takes the dwarfs 4 full days with their walking speed apparently. But they told me that they don't know much about the enemy's walking speed."

The next good point was this.

“Have you been notified of their numbers?”

“Keruk. Even the dwarfs don’t know that. It’s easier to assume that it’s almost infinite.”

It was just as the dwarfs had said.

They had a ridiculously large army that even I had mistaken as a field, or at least that’s how they look from this fortress on top of the mountain.

It would be easier to assume that an endless amount of army is coming towards us, rather than attempting to estimate their exact numbers.

Not too bad.

Actually, it’s very good.

“Keruk. Don’t smile like that. The dwarfs are whispering now that you’ve just lost your shit because you got too scared.”

Lost my shit? That’s hella funny.

I don’t care about the dwarfs’ opinion.

The only thing that matters to me now is my bubbling excitement for the arrival of the massive army.

“All that’s left for me to figure out is about what kind of ‘things’ they are.”

Since it was too far away, I couldn’t quite observe it with my eyes.

It will take me a while until they come in close enough for me to personally scrutinize them.

“Keruk. Here you are, commander. This is a telescope the dwarfs gave me.”

It seems like the dwarfs are very technically advanced.

I didn't expect them to have such advanced technology.

The telescope Idy handed over to me was slightly longer than a meter.

And this telescope was of a very high quality.

Maybe even too high quality.

I should not say a single word regarding their technology ever again.

I could adjust my field of vision by using my mana to zoom in or out; it was a very easy and simple telescope to operate, surprisingly so.

When I maximized my output of magical power, I could finally see each one of the enemies walking through the mountains in surprising detail.

The appearance of the enemy that was finally revealed to my eyes was much more bizarre than I expected it to be.

“Keruk. I feel like my breakfast is coming back up.”

Idy mumbled after looking at the enemies' appearances with the telescope.

Honestly though, they do have a look that could make Idy's breakfast travel back up her throat.

I couldn't find a single one that had normal body parts, no matter how hard I looked for it.

Their body reminded me of a collection of rags on the verge of falling apart. Their bodies consisted of randomly mismatched body parts placed in the strangest of places.

Their facial features were distributed unevenly and bizarrely, their inner organs were sticking out of their bodies and actively pumping, and some were walking with hands attached to their lower body instead of legs. They were even holding weapons with their legs, which were attached to their shoulder, instead of hands.

And there were few that had actual human heads.

The others mostly had animal or monster.

Maybe they took those inner organs or body parts away from other monsters and attached it to themselves.

Only one name popped up in my head at first glance.

“Chimera?”

“Keruk. That’s right. They’re chimeras. Now I understand what they meant by the name ‘Trilogy’, Keruk.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Dark, Red, and Blue; the three moons.”

What the heck is that is what I’m asking.

“It is a symbol for the worst of the worst dark magicians that existed in earth history. Three different-colored moons symbolize the three evils that granted them the ability to use dark magic and taught them how to use it. They were like the death guards of dark magicians.

“Wr....”

One dwarf cut us off.

“Hmm.... I see.”

Idy mumbled after hearing unexpected words from the dwarf.

“Commander, the dwarfs had just told me that they are not black magicians; they’re just an army of monsters created by the black magicians. Apparently, the black magicians who created them were executed by the empire more than 100 years ago. I guess that’s a relief for us, knowing that there is no magician among them.”

“But there are too many of them to believe that the magicians do not even exist any longer. That must mean that they have been maintaining that number since over 100 years ago without their



creators.”

“Tha....”

“....According to this dwarf....Umm....”

“What is it?”

“The chimeras have a special function allowing them to reproduce. And at a frightening rate too.”

I guess the black magicians who were executed by the empire have left not only just artificial monsters behind, but a rare achievement on earth’s history before they died.

I wasn’t an expert on black magic, but even I could tell that their piece of work was truly extraordinary.

Reproduction, huh.

I mean, look at them; they don’t look like they could have genitals, not to mention a sex drive.

It’s impressive how they’ve been increasing their numbers independently without the black magicians’ orders.

That must mean that they possess intellect to some extent.

I guess that’s why they’re invading our territory to steal the dragons’ inheritance.

The black magicians’ inheritances are surviving by increasing their numbers through reproduction and are now trying to steal dragon’s inheritance.

It’s an interesting setting.

“Keruk. Keruk.”

Idy laughed awkwardly beside me.

It really did look like her breakfast was climbing back up her throat.

“...Truly disgusting indeed. Keruk.”

I agree.

Their appearances are truly gruesome.

And it's such a pity that this is their normal and healthy appearance.

I could sympathize to that.

I have witnessed something terrible.

Idy's facial expression was full of aversion, disgust and dismay.

Well, I couldn't sympathize to that.

Of course, those chimeras are such beings that trigger sadness and pity just simply through their disgusting appearance.

I get that.

That's why I could understand if anyone were to feel horrible just by taking a look at their appearance, or feel pity or compassion towards them having such sad life.

But Idy's expression showed something more than that.

"I'd rather throw up. It's the first time ever in my life I have had to see such dirty creatures. Keruk. And that number, oh my gosh."

I looked again.

"Dir...."

"Fu...."

"T....Y...."

"Ck...."

"Ki....Me...."

I witnessed the Dwarfs swearing at chimeras.

I couldn't find any significant difference between the Dwarfs and chimera.

To me, I harbored the same feelings of pity and aversion towards

them.

Of course they were notably different on the outside.

The dwarfs were short, but they all had normal human face.

They were completely different with chimeras, whose body were parts dangling around all over the place along with the blood stains on the skins.

But really, you shouldn't badmouth someone based on how they look on the outside, just because they happen to have many scars and some deep blood stains.

At least, I cannot do that.

If that's the case, there wouldn't be any creature any more hideous than myself.

If it weren't for the Elixir potion and the waiting room's healing effect, I would have ended up with an appearance and facial features like the chimeras.

Moreover, the bloods, the inner organs, the cut body parts flying around were something that felt very familiar to me at this point, to the point where they can't bother me anymore.

I guess that's why I don't find the chimeras' appearances to be too shocking for me.

And if I put the obvious visual defects aside, it's very hard for me to significantly differentiate the chimeras and the dwarfs.

It seems to me that the dwarfs, who all share the same face, same physical frame, same magical ability, same behavior, and the same characteristics, are a more uncomfortable creature to be around than the chimeras.

Lacking individuality is a greater fault than lacking body parts.

I wonder how they interpret the definition of self-esteem.

As my thoughts trailed on, I heard a loud noise echoing from

somewhere far below me.

Millions of chimeras had begun to run towards the mountaintop.

Their heavy footsteps sounded like a ferocious thunderstorm.

Finally, the battle was about to officially begin; all my distracting thoughts disappeared into a smoke, left only with anticipation for the battle.

I wonder how long this battle will take.

I personally want it to last all day long, and even all through the night.

I have a feeling that those chimeras won't complain about darkness in the night at all, after all.

I assumed their vision would be equally bad in the bright daylight anyway.

“Are you going already?”

“Yes. I want to get a feel of the field until the enemies finally reach anywhere near the fortress.”

Even though the chimeras were climbing the mountain at an extraordinary speed, it still seemed like it will take them at least few hours.

The chimeras were running in a straight line towards the fortress, crossing very steep mountain hills.

It would be extremely convenient for me if I could kill them all by myself before they reached the fortress, but it would be an unrealistic goal since they have such huge army.

I better think of some other strategy to reduce their numbers.

“Keruk. Then I better head to the back side.”

“Alright. See you after the battle ends.”

“Keruk. Keruk. Just don't get hurt, commander.”

After hearing Idy's farewell, I jumped off from the fortress wall.

[Talaria's Wings]

I spread my wings and began to fly.

After a short flight, I deactivated Talaria's Wings and dropped to the ground.

The dwarfs had told me that it takes them 3 days to climb up the mountain by foot.

However, it would only take me 10 minutes to fly over to where chimeras are right now.

In such viciously hilly terrain like this, my mobility skills reach their peak potential.

Now, if I have such outstanding mobility, do I really need to wait until they come to me while I stand here?

No. Of course not. I have to go annoy them to hell.

The chimeras were a lot noisier when I was closer to them.

"Kooooehhahhgak!"

I stared at the chimera that was running towards me, shrieking horrifically.

It was about 3 meters tall.

It had 4 shoulders.

It only two arms on each side though.

I assumed my battle posture while holding two hammered-shaped Thousand Arms on both my hands.

Like a baseball bat striking a ball away, I struck that chimera away with my hammer.

It's a bumpy and steep uphill road.

The chimera that was struck away by my hammer started to roll down the hill.

After rolling and rolling, it tried to stop itself by grabbing onto something.

However, he ended up grabbing other chimeras who were only trying to make their way up.

Now the other chimeras, which were grabbed by this chimera, all lost their balance and started rolling down the steep hill. And those chimeras bumped into few other chimeras while rolling down, so now the number of chimeras falling and rolling down increased exponentially.

Here and there, there were chimeras who were attempting to stop themselves by grabbing onto some trees or stones, but it was a useless attempt since they were rolling down at such a velocity that it was impossible.

Their attempts to save themselves only caused more mayhem, as the trees and stone they grabbed onto were uprooted from ground and were now tumbling down along with them.

Chimeras continued to tumble further and further down.

It was like a domino effect; by striking away one chimera, now all of them were rolling down the hill. There they were.

Just like how a small snowball becomes bigger and bigger when you roll it, the amount of chimeras rolling down were exponentially expanding.

Since I can't quite call them a snow ball....let me just call it a chimera ball.

The chimera ball has rolled down and down the slopes, now they have returned to the flat field where they've started.

The chimera ball was now as big as a house.

And I can guess that the pressure they're adding onto each other's bodies must be quite heavy, not to mention how painful it would be when their massive bodies are thrown heavily against

each other.

Even though their bodies are solid as rocks, it must hurt.

[Level up!]

They won't resist death.

Considering the fact that I leveled up right before clearing the 19th floor stage, and I leveled up just now by in one single attack, this is an unbelievable achievement.

Of course it didn't mean that I have completely stopped all of their attacks.

The chimeras were climbing up the whole mountain in all directions.

The horde that was rolled off the hill was only a small portion of their army.

But, now I've figured a very good method for hunting.

I had to reach level 51 in order to be eligible for the level up reward anyways.

My new objective has been set: I will aim to go beyond level 51 before I clear the 20th floor stage.

# Chapter 145 - Tutorial 20th Floor (5)

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Drinking the potions was definitely a good choice. I could clearly experience the effect.

I drank a few potions including the ones that strengthened my power and agility stats, in addition to two other tonic-type potions which are supposedly beneficial for my health.

It didn't look like much of a difference when I looked at my final stats.

I only became a little bit faster, and a little stronger.

But those tiny enhancements have enabled me to bring the most important plan in this battle to realization: to attack before attempting to defend, and to stay clear of the enemies' attack before making a move.

The attack that would have missed the enemy now spears through their vital points.

Including these results, the absorption of potions has made this battle much easier and convenient for me.

“Phew.”

I breathed a sigh while watching the giant chimera ball rolling down the steep hill.

I was dealing with them pretty easily since I took advantage of the steep hill and the fact that the enemies were standing very close to one other; it just made the whole chimera ball thing a lot easier, in addition to the potion's effects streamlining my movements.

I killed at least a million chimeras in just the first three hours.

I think it's a pretty impressive record.

I have already exceeded my initial expectations, which was only to annoy them to hell and slow them down before they could even



arrive at the front of the fortress.

But it seemed like the fun, easy chimera hunting was over now.

The chimeras had completely stopped marching towards me.

I assume they've finally figured out that it's much more efficient to deal with me first than to indiscriminately charge the fortress.

Not bad at all.

My objective is to prevent them from conquering the fortress for 10 days exactly, no less and no more: exactly ten days.

If they decide to create a battlefield here with me in a place far, far away from the fortress, then it will be in my favor.

The chimeras stopped marching, but they didn't immediately attack me.

Instead, they took a step back, moving farther away from me.

They are surrounding me in big circle while maintaining a certain distance away from me.

It's approximately 200 meters.

And then they distanced themselves from each other, and lowered their posture.

"What the heck is going on now, huh?"

Nobody answered my mumbling, of course.

The chimeras kept on doing whatever they were doing.

I guess they finally learned their lesson and were trying to prevent themselves from rolling down the steep hills this time.

If they're maintaining that large of a space between each other, even if the front line falls off, the back line would be able to catch them and set them upright.

Since their muscle strength is unbelievably strong, they'd be able to catch anyone easily even if I hit them off really hard.

And if that's the case, the next thing they'd bring to me is-.

‘Boom!’

One giant chimera jumped over all the other chimeras, occupying my field of vision.

I knew it. If they've created a circular ring, the next thing to appear is obviously a player.

This black chimera has a beast's head.

His head, arms and legs, and whole body were all black.

It wasn't painted; the skin itself was just naturally black colored.

His head and body figure reminded me of a black jaguar.

If it weren't for the sewing marks and uneven body parts, I would've mistakenly thought he was beastman, and not a chimera.

Indeed, this chimera was very well-made.

“I knew something was up, they suddenly wised up and reacted to my attack wisely,” I murmured to myself. “Definitely a commander nearby.”

“Human.”

This one talks.

“Human. What is a human doing in a place like this? There is no way a soldier of empire would have come to this mountain already.”

Well, he speaks well.

Let me try to communicate.

I needed some information anyways; plus I'm sort of really curious.

“I don't belong to the empire's army. I just happen to be here by coincidence.”

“Then. Then may I ask why you are here?”

Wow, he is awfully polite; that's totally unexpected.

And he talks in a far better manner than the dwarfs.

He seems to stutter a little when he talks, but his method of speech is good enough.

Unlike the other chimeras, who seem like they are only half-way to their completed form, this one has one completed figure, and seems to possess great intellect as well.

"To temporarily protect the dragon's inheritance."

The jaguar Chimera was silently deep in thought for a while.

"For how long are you planning on protecting the dragon's inheritance?"

"For exactly 10 days."

"No, No good. The army of the empire would be here by then. Could you please open the way for us? I beg of you."

This is unbelievably surprising.

When I first saw chimeras, I didn't expect us to be able to converse like this.

And he wasn't even threatening me; he was asking in a very polite and gentle manner.

"Could you tell me why you want that damn inheritance?"

"If, if I tell you, would you give it to us?"

"Nope."

The jaguar chimera's facial expression had hardened into a grim expression.

The black pupil of his beastly yellow eye's narrowed like an angry bull.

I slightly switched my foot position, and prepared for a fight that could happen any second.

“Then, then why are you asking me that question?”

The reason was quite simple.

“I am curious.”

The jaguar chimera’s face turned even more frightening.

I didn’t know it was possible for his face to frown to a greater degree it already was.

Impressive.

One more thing that surprised me was the fact that he eventually answered me even though he was growling at me.

“To get our, our humanity back.”

Humanity?

“We are human.”

“Dude, your joke isn’t funny at all.”

At this point his face was thoroughly contorted.

The jaguar chimera began to speak his story.

He told me how they were originally human, but unfortunately got kidnapped by black magicians and transformed into hideous-looking monsters.

And he also told me about what kind of life they were forced to live on as monsters.

He told me all about that painful past, and its sorrow.

He told me that now there are only few Chimeras including himself who still remember their former lives.

He said that the other Chimeras have completely forgotten about their past now and they only thoughtlessly follow his orders.

He also mentioned the fact that even though the black magicians are all executed now, they’ve left such a grave curse on the chimeras; chimeras that don’t have self-awareness are now

indiscreetly expanding their numbers through meaningless reproduction.

And he said that he'd finally made up his mind, after seeing the monstrous-looking offspring endlessly coming to life.

He said he decided to end it all.

He said he decided to take the dragon's inheritance in order to become a human, and abandon their hideous monster-like selves.

He said that was his final decision.

That was his side of the story.

I felt one thing, after listening to his long life story.

I felt like this story was something he'd been waiting to tell somebody for a long time.

I could tell that he thought through about how to tell this story to someone over and over.

He wanted to tell somebody, somebody who was not a chimera.

I can't imagine how much he wanted to justify himself, and to be comforted by someone.

I'm not so sure about any of this anymore.

That was all I felt.

Nothing else really.

"That's entertaining."

"What, what is?"

"So after the dragon died, the dwarfs seem to want to become dragon soldiers by using the dragon's inheritance. They don't seem to realize that even if they successfully become dragon soldiers, the dragon that they devoted themselves to has already died and gone."

"That's right, right. They dream of something meaningless."

“And for you chimeras, when the empire killed all the black magicians, you started dreaming of becoming a human again by using the dragon’s inheritance, even though the other chimeras have gone too far from being able to return to normal human lives.”

Now the jaguar Chimera’s eyes were becoming bloodshot.

I wondered why they didn’t choose to commit suicide instead while I was staring at the jaguar chimera that was low-key growling at me.

They could’ve committed suicide after killing all of the brethren who aren’t self-aware anymore.

If they did it then, they might have been able to realize that they have a hint of humanity left in themselves, and that they have some dignity left as well. Then, they would’ve been able to rest in peace.

People often talk about suicide as if it’s some sort of an escape designed for weak cowards.

They talk as if it’s the act of giving up every possible future opportunity just because you are unable to handle a tiny bit of temporary pressure.

But in reality, death offers a great rest for someone whose life has been put through horrifying conditions.

A person whose life has been put in those terrible conditions can’t shake themselves of the temptation of ending life and becoming free easily.

Surviving in a meaningless and equally worthless life is more anguishing than any temporary pain, and even the pain that comes through and after death.

I know this because I am a survivor myself who is still alive despite harming myself on multiple occasions.

Keeping yourself from committing suicide is not an easy thing to do.

Maybe that's the reason why the chimeras have created one definite goal to achieve instead, and started to become overly obsessive about it.

They are obsessed with their long-lost, now nonexistent humanity.

They must have put their lives on the line to achieve their dream.

That objective must be the one and only reason why they're still alive and breathing.

But humanity is something that is hard to maintain, even as a human.

Even though they somehow gain the ownership of the necklace and awaken its hidden powers, that wouldn't be enough to fully transform them back into humans.

The chimeras might think that the necklace will solve all their lives' problems and set them free, but I definitely do not agree with that.

Not even a God can do such thing for them; what makes them think a necklace can accomplish it?

They might gain some sort of human features on the outside, but they'd still be a monster hiding under imitation human skin.

Just like what the jaguar chimera has just said about the dwarfs, they themselves also carry a very meaningless desire.

“Wha, Wha, Why?”

“Why what?”

“Are we that disgusting? Do you despise us that much? Why are you humiliating us with such cruel words with such conviction, when you have just met us and barely even know who we are?”

I remained silent for a while after hearing this from the jaguar chimera.

And I had to admit it.

It was true that I disliked the chimeras and the dwarves equally.

It's because they shared one thing in common.

They both wanted to change who they were and how much they were worth, just through ownership over a dragon's inheritance.

Another thing they shared in common was the fact that their creator has set their limitation by birth, which limits their purposes in life as well.

The chimeras were created by black magicians to be used for warfare and destruction.

The dwarfs had been created by the dragon to do tedious work as minor laborers.

Now I've finally figured out why I highly dislike them, especially the dwarfs.

I stopped thinking.

I stopped myself from being distracted by all these irrelevant thoughts, clearing my mind.

Now is not the time to think about these unimportant things. I've got a battle to fight.

These are inappropriate thoughts to have right before the beginning of the battle.

"Name. What is your name. Human."

"Lee Ho-Jae."

Will he laugh at my name too?

Since he has a jaguar head, maybe he might laugh too.

Thankfully, he didn't.



Instead, he screeched with a voice loud enough to be echoed through the whole mountain like thunder.

“Lee Ho-Jae! I won’t forget your god damn name! The name of a heartless human who humiliated us all!”

I almost lost my hearing, oh my gosh.

My ears were ringing.

Especially because I was paying him more attention to listen to what he was about to say.

“We will kill you, AND we will get our humanity back!”

Followed by his scream, millions of other Chimeras started to chant at the same time.

I felt the ground shaking as they were chanting.

As tension increased, I became more excited as well.

Their yelling and screaming weren’t only meant to stir up their fervor for battle.

They actually created some sort of magical buff effect.

The jaguar chimera has furtively disappeared from the sight.

He no longer had such angry facial expression; instead, he seemed like he somehow managed to find his calm.

Among the chimeras that were forming the circle ring, the front line began attacking me.

The back line chimeras took one step forward, and stayed still in their positions.

I guess they were not just any normal monsters, but monsters designed specifically for warfare.

Either that or they were specifically trained to function in this way.

I activated my Soul Steal skill, Indomitability skill, coercion skills

and changed each Thousand Arms into a long sword and a shield. I fought against the frontline chimeras that were readying their attacks.

While I was killing the Chimeras one by one very calmly, the second row of chimeras began their attack.

As soon as the second row started their attacks, the third row chimeras took one step forward, made another ring, and stayed in their positions until they were ready to jump at me.

I guess they're trying to attack me row by row, like this.

I guess it's not bad.

I like it like this as well.

The advantage of this fighting strategy was the fact that I can manipulate time to tire them out slowly without giving them time to rest; this way, I become closer to winning this battle.

“Kiiiiiiiiiek!”

One chimera jumped at me with his cut-up arms, I gave his head a nice slice.

The chimera lost its head and its balance, collapsing onto the ground motionlessly.

That's when I activated my Soul Steal skill.

If I activate this skill, my health and vitality will recharge back to normal.

As long as I have my soul steal skill and its health regeneration effect and plenty of enemies that I can cut into pieces, I won't be the one that dies of exhaustion first.

The chimeras continued to execute their enveloping attack seamlessly like well-trained war soldiers.

I need to draw a very clear perimeter.

I need to ensure that I have a wide enough perimeter to act in.

I need a perimeter I can protect myself in.

After continuing this battle for a while, the enemies had begun to grasp vague line I've set.

And then they had nevertheless begun to cross over that line daringly.

I mustn't prioritize certain enemies over others.

If I were to make moves against the ones who've crossed the line and are hesitantly stand and wait for me to come at them first, they will look for the moment I am defenseless and attack me in the moment.

So, I need to make a smart move.

I need to analyze their unique characteristics, skills, and objectives.

I need to be aware of each and every one of them and their movements; I need to fight against them all at the same time.

In the correct order.

I need to make quick decisions about who to defend myself against first, which one to stay away from first, and which ones to attack first.

I am trying to solve a problem without giving a wrong answer, not even once.

That's why it's very crucial to stay extremely focused on the battle around me, rather than focusing on maintaining an unscratched body.

And of course, I need to be wise enough to be able to save my mana and energy efficiently while battling them.

I am quite confident in a battle like this.

Very. Confident.

There was an incident once when I let one of the enemies

successfully jump onto me.

In the past, there were several incidents where I wasn't able to completely defeat the enemy.

There were other incidents where my health was too low and I had to hide away momentarily.

But never have I ever, lost in a battle.

I am the living proof that such a defeat has never happened, not even once.

I swung my sword.

I slit the throat of one of the chimeras standing slightly outside my mental perimeter.

He was attempting to attack my blind side, but I killed him before he could do anything to me.

Someone was swinging an axe behind me.

Instead of turning my body backward to block the hammer, I opened Talaria's Wings and dodged the axe's swing.

At the same time, I sliced a chimera's body into two parts.

There was another axe coming from my right side.

I ignored that attack and positioned by shield to cover my left side.

Using my momentum from swinging my sword, I did a half-spin to greet the next chimera.

Blood spat out from the body of the chimera which I had just cut in half in a blink of an eye.

The giant chimeras began to collapse onto the ground one by one.

They became an obstacle that blocked the other chimeras from running towards me directly.

And an increased number of dead corpses laying around me

became some sort of a trench for me unintentionally.

I was able to kill them one by one much more smoothly now that I had a trench that protected me from Chimeras vigorously jumping onto me from my blind side.

If they slow down their running speed in order not to stumble upon those corpses, I can jump on them before they can jump on me.

At one point, they finally began to realize their disadvantage, and finally stopped themselves from drawing any attacks all together.

“Keeeeeeeeek!”

“Kiiiiiek!”

They were only screeching weirdly now, outside of my attack range.

Are they waiting for their commanders' new order?

I screamed right back at them.

“AHHHHHHH!”

[Soul Cry]

I completely ignored the fact that my skill effect was dismantling the scrum, and I started laughing joyously at the chimeras, which began to jump at me again.

[PR: For all the people that are not fans of American football or rugby, a “scrum” is basically describing the line of players before they smash into each other.]

After the sunset, the chimeras had made their way back to their base, away from the mountain.

I sat down on the ground, watching them march back toward their base wherever it was.

My bum got wet.

It was mostly because of the blood of dead chimeras, but it was

also mixed with some of my blood.

I opened a bottle of Elixir potion with shaking hands, and drank it all.

My body was full of wounds.

After I killed more than a thousand chimeras, their method of attack changed.

Their immature formation or traps didn't work on me as long as I had the Soul Cry skill.

Their new attacking method was to continue attacking without giving me a second to relax, while placing a few outstandingly talented fighters here and there.

Since they were hard to distinguish, I faced several near-death scenarios.

I stood up after the Elixir potion's healing took effect, and I was able to move my legs again finally.

I walked toward the mountain top, and as I stepped onto the dead corpses, they tumbled down.

The corpses rolled down to the bottom of the mountain, making a loud rolling stone noise.

Instead of stepping onto any more corpses, which would only destabilize the mountain of corpses and create unnecessarily loud noises, I decided to fly with Talaria's Wings.

When we look at today's result, it seems like I had unilaterally slaughtered them all, but that's not entirely true.

I experienced my limits today.

No, I was pushed over my limits.

I really had very close calls with death; I could've died, for real.

The enemies must have been able to analyze my power and strength fully today.

They will prepare a new battle plan for tomorrow.

And they still have so many chimeras left.

The number of chimeras is way beyond my prediction.

The battle tomorrow will be much more dangerous.

But I decided to look at this situation in a positive light.

What I felt while fighting against them wasn't a lack of improvement on my part.

I only felt like I was lacking on some aspects, but only because I haven't been put into rigorous battles in the past stages and for that reason I wasn't completely used to battlefields anymore.

But I felt it all coming back very quickly, all thanks to this fierce battle against the chimeras.

Tomorrow's battle will definitely be more dangerous than today's, but I trust myself to overcome it as well.

Regardless, I can make this defense into guerrilla war anytime if I feel like I am not good enough.

I could return back to the fortress in a better mood.

I was very happy, since I faced and overcame such critical and dangerous situations. I was so proud of myself and it felt great indeed.

As soon as I got back to the fortress, one dwarf attempted to communicate with me, instantly ruining my mood.

“Big....”

“Big?”

“Pro....”

I waited patiently.

I waited patiently until the dwarf had managed to say until “Big problem. Liza-“ before I realized that it was about the lizardman,

Iddy.

“D....”

“Idy what! What happened to....”

“Man....”

God damn it, please talk faster, please.

“Is....”

F\*\*\* this shit.



# Chapter 146 - Tutorial 20th Floor (6)

---

"Da... "

Damn it.

I listened to the Dwarves until the end but it would have been better if I had just found out myself.

I flew with Talaria's Wings once more.

I spread my mana aggressively and located Idy.

First, I searched the graveyard that contained the Dragon's Inheritance, which Idy had been guarding.

Fortunately, Idy was in the vicinity.

I flew towards her after I ascertained her location.

A large group of dwarves was gathered at the entrance of the graveyard.

I pushed them out of my way, one of by one, and went into the graveyard. In a corner of the cemetery, I saw a few dwarves whisper and lay out some thick gruel.

The runts had only been tasked with being on watch, so they were becoming impatient.

I used my Overpower (Coercion) skill.

The once bustling cemetery became silent as the dwarves fell onto the floor face down.

Now it was quiet, since the dwarves were on the floor. At leaves above the knees.

I could finally check on Idy.

She had a warm dressing tied onto her body and there were signs of medicine being applied here and there.

"Keruk. Captain, you're finally here?" Idy said.

"What... how did this happen?" I said, examining the area around the wound.

"Keruk, keruk. This is... I'm embarrassed."

After I finished looking over her injury, Idy told me the source of her embarrassment.

I lifted the bandage slightly and I saw a black "something" squirming around the wound.

A squirming black energy.

It was something I'd seen several times on the 9th, 10, and 12th floors.

This was Idy's skill.

"I guess if I were to give you an excuse, it'd be that I had too much on my mind. Keruk. Plus, the chimeras look repulsive. It was strange that they had four limbs, but they also used strange weapons as well."

"Strange weapons?"

"Keruk. They should be buried under Chimeras' bodies. Be careful if you have to fight them later. Keruk."

Amongst the Chimeras I had fought today, I hadn't encountered any that used unusual weapons.

The Chimeras mostly charged in barehanded or they simply used standard weapons.

The Elite Chimeras that appeared occasionally likewise did the same, even though they had superior skills Seriously, I'm really exhausted. This wasn't really a battle, but an ambush.

"And . . ."

"And?"

"Keruk."

"Idy?"

"They said that they wouldn't have to live like beasts anymore if they get that necklace. I don't know if that's actually true, but that's what the Chimeras said. And... they said they were humanity's enemy. When I heard that... my hands slowed. Keruk."

So it was complicated.

At the same time, I felt dizzy.

They had hurt Idy this much over such a trifling issue.

By piecing together the Dragon Troops' complicated story, I figured out that the Chimeras and dwarves sought the necklace because it had the ability to evolve them.

However, that method was a problem.

It wouldn't simply grant superior strength, but advance their species to a higher level.

If that was possible...

What would a Dwarf, which had a higher class existence than a Chimera look like?

What would a Dragon Trooper, which had a lower class existence than a human look like?

Would they simply change into the form that they desired?

No, it was a pointless assumption.

They may gain even greater strength, deeper wisdom, or even a remarkable physical appearance, but in the end, their identity wouldn't change so easily.

Let's assume that a chimera regains their human body and blends into society.

It works at their appointed workplace and live a normal life, so nobody would be able to tell that that person used to be a chimera.

Everyone except for themselves.

They'll remember, deep down, that they used to be a Chimera

and their own words will act as a painful reminder.

It's a task too difficult for one person to do, yet they claim that they'll accomplish the task tens of millions cannot?

That's impossible.

There are only two solutions.

They either accept that they're not monsters or they kill themselves.

The Chimeras laughed at the dwarves' desire to become Dragon Troopers.

It was pointless.

Even I agreed with them.

However, was there really a difference between the dwarves and the chimeras? One side wanted to become Dragon Troopers, while the other sought to become human.

If a god saw them, how would we he feel?

If a dragon saw the dwarves, it would likewise feel indifferent.

"Because of that, I got stabbed like an idiot. Maybe I saw myself in them," Idy said.

I restrained myself from saying what I really wanted to say.

Instead, I asked a different question.

"It's a skill, right?"

"Yep. Keruk."

I momentarily cleared my head.

"I'll remove the bandage now. I'll need to... examine it a bit."

I wrapped my fingertips with mana and cut off the bandage. I carefully took it off but Idy seemed to be in pain and groaned.

After that...

What do I do now?

First, I took out a bottle of elixir.

"Keruk. Keruk. Captain."

"What?"

"Isn't that expensive? Don't waste it," she said, embarrassed.

I felt like I had hit rock bottom.

This was Idy, who had first appeared on the 5th floor.

I had summoned her to the 20th floor and given her an important job because I trusted her.

If I were to give another reason, it would be because I wanted to see her.

She was with me from the start to the end of the stage. The person who was always with me was Idy.

I had cleared several stages with her and I had grown considerably since the 5th floor.

Although the 20th floor was extremely difficult, I thought Idy easily be able to deal with it easily.

Honestly, when she was on the 12th floor, she was pretty relaxed.

Idy had two skills.

One of them she used on the 5th floor; it changed her body into smoke, allowing her to avoid an enemy's attacks.

The other skill was one couldn't use on the 5th floor, though it was an attack that she could use on the 9th, 10th, and 12th floors.

She would be enclosed by a black, death energy that would attack her opponent.

However, there was a problem: if the death energy stuck to the body, there was nothing one could do.

While it had its limitations and it took some time compared to

the nearly-invincible evasion skill, it had the potential to inflict fatal wounds.

I thought I would continue to get help from Idy even on the higher floors, not just the 20th floor.

But she had been hurt by her own skill.

Idy had already tested it on the 12th floor.

She cut her fingertip and the death energy remained in it.

Elixirs were useless.

I had to cut my own finger to shake off the death energy, but I drank an elixir and my finger grew back.

It might've been possible to treat Idy the same way, but it wasn't her fingertip this time.

She had a long injury that stretched from her heart to her stomach. The wound had definitely reached her inner organs as well.

I raised my hand and took a closer look.

The wound was too deep.

Even if the death energy wasn't there, it would still be a fatal injury.

An incision wasn't possible.

"Keruk.No matter how I look at it, there's no hope," Idy said.

That's also how I saw it.

I shook my head and cast out the thoughts deep in my head.

Some time ago, I began to think of only one thing when someone was dying.

Excessive bleeding, shock, difficulty breathing, ruptured inner organs. When I saw those symptoms, I knew the person was simply a corpse.

They'll die soon, they're nothing more than a corpse.

Get up and leave. There's nothing you can do, they're a corpse.

I swallowed down those thoughts from the depths of my mind.

As I stifled those thoughts, something else came out.

I roughly wiped my tears.

"Does it... hurt?" I asked.

"Keruk. Keruk. Are you worried? You know that this skill doesn't deliver any pain. I just feel the pain from the cut."

I went silent for a moment.

I opened my mouth to speak but nothing came out.

"Keruk. Anyway, there're always risks on the battlefield. It was fatal for me to get hit by my own ability like an idiot, but I have a lot of other injuries. It was really close. Then again, if that were true, I would've been able to get treatment. But starting tomorrow, I won't be of much help in the battle."

'Then again, if that were true, I would've been able to get treatment,' she had said.

I didn't just call Idy to fight.

Honestly, calling her for help was just an excuse.

It's just... when I came back, I thought it would be nice to have someone to eat with and talk to. That's all I really wanted.

"Keruk. Keruk. Actually, it went well."

I hid my shaking hands behind me.

"Idy... Idy. Don't worry too much. I'll immediately summon you..." I rambled.

Suddenly, my head turned to the side.

When I got ahold of myself, I saw Idy's rustling tail on the side of my face.

"Keruk. Get ahold of yourself, Captain. I can't help but worry."

Although I got smacked by Idy's tail, I couldn't understand her intentions.

"Captain. Why are you worrying about me?"

"...What?"

"Captain, are you possibly afraid of me dying?"

I was silent once again.

"Captain, don't you already know? We sometimes avoided the subject but it doesn't change the facts."

I remained silent.

"Captain, I'm already dead."

I really couldn't do anything but stay silent.

"How do you feel, Captain?"

During the long silence, Idy began speaking again.

"Keruk. First, take the unconscious dwarves outside. If we leave them like that, they might suffocate."

Just like she said, I moved the unconscious dwarves outside.

"I moved them all."

"Keruk. Come back after you put a blanket on the unconscious ones, at the bare minimum."

Like she said, I draped a blanket over the unconscious ones and laid them outside the cemetery before coming back.

"Keruk. Keruk."

"I'm done."

"Good job, Captain. Now... shall we talk? Also, I'll leave behind a request and some advice at the end of the talk. It looks like I don't have much time left, so let's start now."



I nodded.

"Keruk. How should I start...I kept thinking about it, but it's a difficult topic."

Idy 'keruked' for a moment, thought about it, and then began to speak.

"Let's continue our discussion. Keruk. I'm already dead."

Idy spoke calmly but her words slowly pierced my heart.

"One life, one soul. It's something that is said in our tribe. However, what about me? I have only one soul but I have many lives. Maybe I don't have a life or a soul. Keruk."

"Idy..."

"Captain, you always regretted killing me, even though I told you not to. Keruk. I never died to you. My death happened before then. Keruk."

It was something she had once talked about on the 10th floor.

"Of course, I don't know how I died. However, that..."

Idy's face froze.

Her face went blank.

The system disapproved of her words.

She grinded her teeth and bit on her blood.

"Keruk. I'll have to pass over that. Hoo."

She took a deep breath and continued.

"Captain, I know that you treat everything you meet in the Tutorial as if it were real. You even treat lifeless beings as if they were real and just brush past everything to clear, as if you were in a play. It's as if this has become the real world to you and we've become real people to you. That's why you feel happiness and sadness from the people you meet here. You feel anguished when you have to kill an enemy. Keruk. But if you were to challenge

them again, they'd look exactly the same. Keruk."

I was silent.

Idy, too, was silent for a moment.

It persisted to the point where we became self-aware of how much time had passed in silence. Then, Idy continued.

"It'll be easier if you ignore it all. They're not real, so don't think. Just cut them down, and pass them. It'll be easier for you. But you don't do that, do you, Captain? You feel uneasy, don't you? Keruk. Captain, you think that, just like us, you might have died, and only your soul is left roaming around."

She's right.

As time passed, my suspicions lessened somewhat, but lately, my suspicions have returned.

I also feel like I'm a puppet in some kind of play.

"I'll have the change the topic of discussion first. Keruk."

Idy raised her hand and grabbed mine.

My hands were still shaking a little.

"Keruk. Captain, I'm sorry to say this but you have to look at reality. I'm just an item."

An item.

When I heard that, I thought of the unconscious dwarves outside.

"The only Idy you know is me. But how many Idaltarus, who are killing challengers and conversely getting killed, do you think there are on the 5th floor, Captain?"

[PR Note: Just a reminder that Idaltaru is Idy's real name, or at least the name the system identifies her with. "Idaltarus" is the plural form referring to multiple "hers."]

I knew.

I thought about it countless times but it was a subject that troubled me.

Idy's face went blank again.

She would intentionally say things that were restricted and when she was reprimanded by the system, she would experience a piercing headache.

However, Idy didn't suppress her feelings.

"I was lucky, wasn't I? Because of you, Captain, I became self-aware of my condition and I was able to spend my time happily with you. I'm really thankful to you, Captain."

She let go of my hand and raised her own.

She wiped my tears as she 'keruked', and laughed.

"I'm sorry, but this is the end. It's really too bad that I can't talk to you anymore. Keruk."

The gods and the system didn't want her to talk anymore.

Idy couldn't even talk about the subject indirectly and couldn't remind me about it.

The only thing left for me to do is to find out what she wanted to say.

"Now it's time for me to be a bit shameless, huh. Keruk." She candidly laughed.

"Captain," she called.

"What?"

"Captain, I like you."

She 'keruked' and laughed.

"You probably do too. Though it might be a different form of affection, at least you like me as a friend, as a comrade."

I think of you as family.

"I have a request and some advice. It would seem like... I'll give you some advice first. I heard about your growth yesterday."

I nodded.

"Keruk. I think that your growth is lacking. Actually, I think it's being repressed."

"What?"

"Keruk. Keruk. Don't compare yourself to others, Captain. The only one that can compare to you is yourself. Do you think that your growth at its best right now?"

My growth rate is extremely fast.

It's to the point that the system can't keep up.

From the very beginning, I couldn't even be compared to the other challengers. I was at a level that they couldn't even comprehend.

However, I listened to Idy's words attentively.

Last night, I had told Idy, in fair detail, about the progress of my growth.

If she was the one saying my growth was lacking, it was definitely lacking.

"Next up is my request. Keruk."

"Ask me anything," I spoke calmly, after I had relaxed a bit.

"Sorry about this, but I have two."

"Don't be sorry. It's fine if there're more."

"Keruk.Keruk."

I didn't feel burdened by her requests. Rather, I hated the fact that she felt embarrassed about her requests.

"How many more times can you use the Summon Dead skill?"  
(Summoning Dead) "2 more times."

"You had less remaining than I thought. It looks like my request will be more shameless than I thought. Keruk."

"What's wrong?"

"Don't summon me anymore, Captain."

I've been shocked a lot today but nothing could've prepared me for this.

I couldn't help but ask. What did she mean?

"Idy. What are you talking about?"

Her eyes spun and she bowed her head furtively.

"Idy!"

"Instead, instead... When I become a single Idy, rather than those countless Idaltarus...When I'm freed of all my restraints. When I can exist as just me, as just "Idy", can you summon me then?"

Now I could finally read her expression.

Due to the shape of their head, when a lizardman bows, it doesn't hide their face at first.

"Of course, I know it's impossible. I also know how useful the Summon Dead skill can be..." Idy rambled.

"I got it, Idy. I'll do as you ask. Don't worry," I replied.

Idy cleared her throat and stared at the plain ceiling.

"Keruk. Keruk. I'm not worried. I trust you. You'll definitely succeed. The only thing you needed, Captain was... No. no, it's nothing."

"What is it?"

Idy continuously moved her head side to side and slowly turned her head, avoiding my eyes.

She was really embarrassed.

Now that I think about it, it's the first time since the 5th floor

she's asked me for a favor.

She had told me all about her tribe's characteristics, so it was definitely a rare case.

"Keruk. Keruk. I knew that my time was tight, but I still have a little bit of time left. My heart rate is slowing down, though. Captain."

"What?"

"Have you calmed down a bit?"

"Yeah."

"You sure are a strange boss. Keruk. So how about talking some more with the time I have left?"

"All right, what do you want to talk about?"

"Keruk. Keruk. What do you mean? Anything. Do you not want to?"

"Sounds good."

It'd be great if we could talk while eating, but Idy wasn't capable of eating anything in her current condition.

It didn't matter.

Eating wasn't important right now.

It wasn't hard to figure out what Idy had wanted to say.

Because in the end, she had told me everything she wanted to.

It was obvious what Idy wanted.

Her condition to summon her again...

I needed to get her out of the tutorial system completely and free her of her restraints before I could summon her again.

She didn't simply want me to summon her after clearing the Tutorial.

If I did, then I'd just be summoning an Idaltaru from the 5th floor

who was under the Tutorial's jurisdiction.

I had to completely pull her out of the system. If that doesn't work, I'll just have to free everyone in this Tutorial. With that, I satisfy all of her conditions.

But I don't know how to do it.

There's far too much I don't know about the system.

Even if I learned all I could about the system, I still wouldn't be even be able to comprehend the basics of the system and how it works.

But now, I knew the path that I needed to take.

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

Idy said my growth was lacking.

My growth certainly isn't lacking.

I had already surpassed the system's guidelines and I didn't face many difficulties in the party stages.

It's probably going to be easy to clear the Tutorial.

However, if I want more, then my growth is definitely lacking.

I expected nothing less of Idy. She knew me well.

Idy's trial was much more interesting than the Tutorial.

I saw the necklace floating in the center of the cemetery.

I snatched the floating necklace and put it around my neck.

I didn't have any reason to hide the necklace or face off against any enemies right now.

Besides, it's safest here. After all, I'm here.

If I take the necklace, I won't have to continue the mission. I won't have to split the single necklace and I can draw out the remaining chimeras.

When I went outside, I was met with the confused faces of the

dwarves.

As always, I don't like them.

But when I put myself in their shoes, I don't feel unpleasant anymore.

I've been told many times as to why the gods brought me here.

To become a disciple of a god.

That was all.

That wasn't my intent.

I was reborn here.

The tutorial revitalized me and brought me new life.

It was a misfortune but at the same time, it brought me happiness.

I was thankful for the Tutorial.

I didn't worry about getting out quickly. Rather, I worried about what I would do after I got out.

I secretly wished that the Tutorial would go on forever.

I hadn't become self-aware until I had my talk with Idy.

Now there was another common feature between the dwarves and me.

But there was also a clear difference now.

Instead of listening to the dwarves' stuttering, I flew around with Talaria's Wings.

I flew away from the mountains and towards the plains.

I flew above the chimeras that filled up the plains.

I wonder how many there are...

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

I received a message from the gods and descended onto the



ground.

I fell towards the ground at full speed.

I don't know what my full power is.

I've never tested it before.

That's why I've always felt so uneasy, like I was suffocating.

I never met a suitable opponent and I've never been able to wield my full strength.

However, I could gauge my strength in a different way.

[Indomitable]

[Iron wall]

[Heightened Senses]

[Battle Concentration]

I used my skills and drew out mana to protect my body.

Kwang!

When I crashed onto the ground, the landscape around me erupted in a cloud of dirt.

I monitored the situation.

My arms and legs, head, inner organs, and magic circuits were all functioning optimally.

Even the durable Talaria's Wings in my body felt a shock when I exceeded its max speed.

The chimeras around the impact point looked as though they were about to faint from shock.

The other chimeras further away from the impact point couldn't get a hold of themselves and merely looked on vacantly.

We can't have that, now can we?

"Uah!"

[Soul Cry]

[Siphon Soul] (Soul Steal)

[Overpower] (Coercion)

Soul Cry aggravated the half-awake chimeras and they started to dash towards me.

Of course, they wouldn't be able to tell how dangerous I was.

I coated my sword with the largest amount of aura I was capable of.

It was two times longer than even a swordmaster's aura.

I surrounded my shield and armor with aura as well.

I should discard my previous fighting style.

I fiercely dashed forward.

The chimeras crashed against my shield.

The chimeras attacked me one after another and I was pushed back.

I swung my sword in the largest, longest arcs possible.

I formed an Aura on my longsword three to four times longer than before and immediately severed the chimeras' huge bodies.

I advanced forward. Only forward.

The chimeras charged at me and I followed suit.

I should save as much mana and stamina as possible and calmly and carefully maintain my distance... I threw away this approach.

I charged boldly without holding back.

I had already prepared plenty of defensive measures.

There's no way that I'd run out of mana or stamina.

As long as I dealt with my enemies, Siphon Soul would allow me to recover faster than I would expend my mana and stamina.

"Uah!"

I relentlessly used Soul Cry in order to call all the chimeras towards me.

Blood spurted out.

The highly compressed Aura at the edge of my armor and my sword started to swell.

The aura blazed on my bloodied sword.

The burnt smell of flesh stunk.

Amidst the horrid stench of blood and the enemy's screams of agony...

"Uah!"

... I'm still alive.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 20th Floor, Clear.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 4000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 4000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 3700 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 6300 points have been deducted.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[The God of Slowness is satisfied.]

[The God of Adventure is cheering for you.]

[The God of Dueling is satisfied.]

[The God of Death is pleased.]

[The God of Devotion pities someone.]

[The God of Life is displeased with you.]

[The God of Pain is delighted.]

[The God of the Sky is disgusted by you.]

[Based on your play records, additional rewards will be given.]

[The God of Dueling would like to gift you some of his power instead of an additional reward. Would you like to accept?]

[The God of Dueling would like you to become his disciple.]

[The God of Adventure is worried.]

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 21th Floor, Perfect Clear.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[The God of Death would like you to become his disciple.]

[The God of Adventure is panicking.]

[The God of Slowness is making fun of someone.]

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 22th Floor, Perfect Clear.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[The God of the Sky is showing an interest in you.]

[The God of Balance is looking at you again.]

[The God of Adventure is really panicking.]

[The God of Slowness snorted.]

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 23th Floor, Clear.]

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 24th Floor, Perfect Clear.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 9400 points.]

[Many gods show a react negatively to you. 600 points have been deducted.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple have agreed to a few promises regarding you.]

[The God of Adventure is restless.]

[The God of Slowness is slightly anxious.]

# Chapter 147 - Tutorial 60th Floor (12)

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"In the kitchen preparing dinner, the plates rattle and clatter. At the front of the door, the bell goes jingle, jingle," Yong Yong hummed while he sat in front of a floor table.

When did I teach him that song again?

I don't remember.

Maybe that clone bastard taught him.

Yong Yong continued to hum the tune and color on drawing paper with a crayon.

Not too long ago, I sketched Disney animation characters on some drawing paper and made a coloring book for Yong Yong.

Since I had finished teaching Yong Yong magic, I'd teach him whatever he wanted now.

Yong Yong likes coloring books.

He really likes coloring princess characters like the Little Mermaid or Cinderella.

Also, he uses the pink crayon a lot.

I secretly felt anxious, even while petting his head.

You're a boy, Yong Yong.

I checked everything.

I changed my mind.

It doesn't matter what my son's tastes are.

Yong Yong is my son regardless of his tastes.

Don't become as uptight as your dad.

I lifted the newspaper instead of groaning and moaning about my problems alone.

This month, the newspaper was shocking starting from the first

page.

[Lee Joon Seok has been judged as the first G-Rank Awakened.]

It's definitely been a long time since Lee Joon Seok got out, but it likewise took just as long to decide his rank.

He finally received a G-Rank designation.

It must be considerably shocking even to the outside.

No, it's just as shocking on the inside since the community's making a fuss.

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: Does this make any sense? Was this fabricated?]

[Lee Gook , 99th floor: This is a ranking from the Association. What do you mean by fabricated? Say something that makes sense. Seriously.]

[Jung So Rim, 85th floor: What level was he when he came out, to be G-Rank? From what I remember, the highest Awakened rank is SSS-Rank.]

Nowadays, the Awakened's rank is generally determined by level.

In the beginning, clear difficulty determined ranks.

However, as the difference between the highest Normal-Difficulty Awakened and the lowest Hard-Difficulty Awakened continued to narrow, one's rank would be readjusted based on the Awakened's individual ability.

So now, the Awakeneds' abilities vary continuously. Though it may be difficult to distinguish between the ranks, that's how it is now.

When I was consulted by the government, I also agreed to it.

Truthfully, the Tutorial System also uses levels as its standard and adjusts the difficulty based on level.

The average level of Normal and Hard Difficulty Awakened who

make it out of the Tutorial is 40 - 50. Awakened who are level 40 - 50 are considered S-Rank.

If they pass level 51, they're recognized as SS-Rank.

The prominent members of the Hard Difficulty were all SS-Rank.

Amongst the members of the Hard Difficulty, there was a small special minority.

They progressed through the same stages and would perhaps discover a Hidden Piece. They were people with a strange fate.

These people were born with exceptional abilities.

Only those minority were assigned SSS-Rank.

You become SSS-Rank at level 101.

But people widely believed that it was impossible to cross over the wall to SSS-Rank.

There were many people who were SS-Rank, since it encompassed a wide level range of 51 - 91. However, the problem was that you had to start from level 100 for SSS-Rank.

Of course, there was no one who was above level 110 amongst them.

Of course, there'd sometimes be people who expected me to break it when I clear the Hell Difficulty.

However, in the midst of all that, a monster from the Hard Difficulty showed up.

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: They say he's level 201.]

[Kim Myung Min, 90th floor: Did you . . . say level 201? Is he human?]

[Jung So Rim, 85th floor: That's crazy.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: I told you that I don't make things up.]



[Park Joon, 90th floor: In any case, I've decided to leave next year. Even if I leave this year, I'm still old news.]

[Lee CheolJoong, 94th floor: What's your level right now?]

[Park Joon, 90th floor: Me? Well, I guess I'm level 93.]

If you're level 93, say that you're level 93. What the hell do you mean by, 'I guess'.

In the community, Hard Difficulty challengers would converse amongst themselves regarding this or that.

Challengers who were at similar levels usually left the Tutorial at the same time and were typically friendly with one another.

Hard Difficulty, in particular, felt like a club.

[Kim Myung Min, 90th floor: What level was Ho Jae back in day? It might have been several years ago but I think he was over level 200.]

[Lee Gook, 99th floor: ... I thought you were just making stuff up but I feel like you're telling the truth.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: What level was he? Why haven't I heard about this?]

[Jung So Rim, 85th floor: I remember.]

[Choi Min Hwan, 81st floor: I also remember that he was over level 200.]

[Lee Cheol Joong, 94th floor: Even if there's a difference, aren't those two on a similar level? They're both over level 200.]

[Choi Min Hwan, 81st floor: But that was several years ago.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: I'm level 351 right now, kids.]

I drove the community into chaos and let them go at it.

Now that I think about, I remember telling the community that I was level 251.

Lee Joon Seok might've made that his goal. I don't know.

If that 'monster' to level 201 without leveling up but by modifying his level, it meant his actual level was around level 250.

I thought they might've caught up by now.

Until they heard my level.

They were more shocked than Lee Joon Seok thought.

Even so, there's nothing I can do about it.

Let's just finish reading the newspaper.

The next headline was about Lee Joon Seok.

He had joined up with Kim Min Hyuk's clan.

It looks like Korea will go crazy over this.

Kim Min Hyuk is acting contrary to my expectations.

I didn't expect him to enter politics.

Yeah... I'm sure he'll do fine.

There's nothing that a person can do inside but stay still and wait, even if there's something massive happening on the outside.

On the contrary, there was something outside the 60th floor. Its' presence was even stronger this time.

I felt a small hand poke my side.

It was Yong Yong.

"Hm? What's wrong, Yong Yong?"

At some point, he had finished coloring and covered up his drawing paper.

Yong Yong looked at me, lifted my arm, and snuggled into my chest. He sat on one side of my lap and hugged me.

"What's wrong?"

"Dad, when will uncle come back?"

He was talking about my clone bastard.

That guy went to the 61th floor, running away from home like a little girl, and still hadn't come back.

"I wonder. Shouldn't he be back soon?"

Although there hadn't been any word yet, I wasn't really concerned.

In any case, I created that bastard using myself as a model.

He was in the process of developing his own personality, so he was different from me and liked different things, but his very nature didn't change.

I soothed Yong Yong but I detected a strong magical shockwave.

Someone was trying to enter the 60th floor against my will.

An unwelcome guest.

It's really surprising.

Lee Yeon Hee hasn't even come close yet.

Most of the Gods can't enter inside the Tutorial.

The Gods were shackled by several restraints, so they couldn't just do whatever they wanted with the Tutorial.

If one of them wanted to act directly, they'd need the consent of all 100 Gods.

Not too long ago, the Earth Server had over 3000 Gods watching over it.

But now, no God could thoughtlessly take part in the Earth's server.

Therefore, the uninvited guest wasn't a God or their disciples.

There was only one thing it could possibly be.

"Let's go, Yong Yong. I think your uncle is back."

"Really?"

I carried Yong Yong and arrived in the vicinity of the portal.

When I got near, the space started to distort.

My defense mechanisms and my clone bastard's strength were clashing.

You shitty bastard.

I told you to train your magic.

It looks like Yong Yong will catch up soon.

I drew on my magic and lifted some of the barriers.

The distortion in the room ceased and the portal began to activate.

"Uncle!"

My clone bastard appeared above the portal.

He seemed like he was the same as he always was.

Anyway, now I know why the barriers activated.

What could he have been doing until now? He came covered with the Gods' power.

My clone bastard didn't even greet or say anything to Yong Yong. He just strutted over.

I'm feeling uneasy.

That guy's not just some normal crazy bastard.

In the future, I expect a grave situation to occur.

I wondered whether I should block Yong Yong's eyes and ears or whether I should stop my clone bastard from walking.

In the end, I couldn't come to any decision and the clone bastard stopped right in front of Yong Yong and me.

Since his uncle didn't respond, Yong Yong looked taken aback and looked back and forth between me and the clone.

The clone bastard looked a little flushed.

His eye were shining brightly, so it looks what I had feared had come to pass.

"I felt the sunlight on my ears until sunset, a joyous trip"

You crazy fucking bastard.

That's what you say when you're parting ways.

" ... C'mon, just do it.They're my favorites lines. "

I should've covered Yong Yong's ears earlier.

Damn it. Damn it. Damn it.

Hey, do you really need to do this?

[Please.]

"... I laughed and with a smile just like when I had departed, I returned and found peace."

...I felt like my organs had just been gouged out.

Truthfully, I had already experienced it a few times, so I knew exactly what it felt like.

My mood soured while the clone bastard rejoiced.

"Did you really want to try that that badly?"

The clone bastard nodded and took Yong Yong, who was nestled in my arm, and lifted him up.

"Yong Yong, were you well?"

"Yep!"

I left them to converse between them.

I confirmed that the gods' lingering presence couldn't communicate through the 60th floor.

You have to be meticulous in situations like this.

Also...

"Hey, what could you have possibly been doing in the 61st floor that you'd be so thickly covered with the gods' power?"

I wanted to let him have some more alone time with Yong Yong but I couldn't help asking him.

The way the clone bastard laughed was far too triumphant.

It rubs me the wrong way.

"Well, not much happened."

"Put down Yong Yong for a minute."

I want to sock him once.

Rather than putting him down, he cuddled him instead.

"Nothing really happened. Yep. As soon as I got to the 61st floor, they all began to observe me."

"Watching you? It shouldn't be possible since you're not a challenger."

"Well, I got a message that they seemed to be in agreement on something and it seems that even I could see it."

"And?"

"And it seemed like I had gained the rights of a challenger, and I went in front of the Boss Room and checked."

"What was the result?"

"I didn't."

"... You aren't even a challenger, but they sent you a message that they're curious?"

"Yeah. I don't have any idea either."

I had something that I had to have Park Jung-Ah figure out.

Could a non-challenger progress this way?

Could it be a unique case?

"Also, well . . . Since they were interested, I took a little bit of their power. I moved silently and nabbed some. That's why I was bit late. Hoohoo."

"How much?"

"1263."

I was momentarily speechless and stared at the clone bastard.

This guy said that he'd messed with over 1200 gods?

"What did they want?"

"They wanted me to become their disciple."

There was no way the clone bastard would accept their request.

I said this before, but his nature is similar to mine.

He rejected my offer to become my disciple so there was no way he'd become a disciple some other God.

"I did well, right? Right? Say something. Main body bastard! Hurry up and bow your head and say thank you."

You did well.

Congratulations on becoming a cosmic swindler.

"Louder. Even sweeter! Say it out loud!"

"Good job, Lee Ho Chi."

The man whose face looked like a blooming flower was no more... Lee Ho Chi's face turned dark.

[If you call me that name again . . .]

"Let's go."

I ignored his warning and walked back.

For a while, the clone bastard droned on about something and followed behind me.

"Where are we going?"

"What do you mean by 'where'? We're going to the lab."

A god's power isn't simply a high-ranking skill.

Through the process of becoming a God, they gain an 'authority.'

Their authority is their identity as well as their core.

Just by digging them up one by one, I can raise greatly raise my level.

I had already dissected the authority skills and I succeeded in modifying them.

That's why, the general magic I created had been able to advance to the next level.

However, I can't create authorities on my own yet.

My limit was modifying authorities that already existed.

When I was blocked by a wall, I needed new ideas or new materials and the clone bastard had brought me some materials just in time.

There were more than 1200 authorities inside.

Therefore, we obviously had to go to the lab.

"Hey, I just came back. Can't we start tomorrow?"

"Nope. We're working through the night starting today."



# Chapter 148 - Author's Words

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Finally the second part has finished.

Second part had total of 91 episodes; from episode 56 to episode 147.

Part 1 was about how Lee Ho Jae has survived the tutorial, and his journey through all the tutorial stages, just as it was mentioned on 60th floor where Lee Ho Jae is mentioning something about the past-on the part 1, end of second episode.

And unlike the part 1 which was focused on stage clearance and adventures, part 2 talked more about Lee Ho Jae's inner personal changes.

In more details, Part 1 was all about new adventure and survival, and Part 2 was about the adaptation and the life in Tutorials.

Lee Ho Jae used to be a person who only drank water and ate beef jerky while putting all his energy into creating stage clear strategies for survivor, has now changed ever since he entered a solo stages.

Since Ho Jae has been able to ensure his survivor through his past progressive processes and achievements, he turns his eyes onto something else other than just stage clearing strategies.

Ho Jae who has started a new life in Tutorial has begun to blend in to the life of Tutorial itself while meeting many new relationships.

And he changes little by little through his new life, and feels various happiness here and there.

Of course in the end... yes, something bad happens. But he is happy until the middle part.

Well to be honest I tried to fill in the blank hole existing inside Ho Jae.

Lee Ho Jae who was slowly dying in his small room had always desired a new life filled with exciting tasks and achievements, but he also wanted a happy and not lonely life at the same time.

That's why Lee Ho Jae is clinging onto his relationships, unlike before. And he even began to chat with the enemies.

Whenever he confronts a new enemy, instead of going right into the battle, he tries to communicate first.

And he suffers from new loneliness and self destructing thoughts which he never felt before the Part 2.

But in the end of Part 2, Ho Jae starts to be thirsty for new stimulation.

And since Idy realized this, Idy has assigned him a new thrilling task, and ends the part 2, bringing the part 3 into the picture.

Now that I look at it, Part 2 has started with Idy and ended with Idy.

When I first started writing this story I didn't expect myself to come this far.

Not to mention the paid chapters, but I thought if I could write up to 20 episodes, that'd be enough for me and my goal.

Maybe that's why it all feels unreal to me still, even after finishing the Part 2.

Fortunately I could finish the part 2 as I've planned originally, and I'm really thankful for that.

If I were to pick something I was very dissatisfied with, was the episode where it had the second competition.

I ended up skipping the half of the final part.

If I could excuse myself a little,

There were lots of reasons why, but it was mainly because I wanted to emphasize Ho Jae's emotions that he felt when he

returned to the waiting room after finishing the competition.

I wanted all of you to sympathize with the feeling that he felt when he finally returned home from a long long journey, to an empty room without lights, that loneliness, that emptiness, I wanted to convey that feelings to you guys.

If possible, I want you all to feel ‘wow, it was a really long journey, but I’ve finally made my way back here’ this sort of returning home feeling.

That’s why I purposely extended the length of the story.

Yes. It wasn’t a nice try to perform on paid chapters.

Maybe it would’ve worked if I had written them more entertainingly.

Part 3 will feel something in between Part 1 and 2.

To be exact, it will be more similar to Part 1.

In the meantime,

I wanted to do Q&A.

There seem to be lots of parts that caused your curiosity.

And since it was always in first person’s perspective, there were lots of stuff that got overlooked or got skipped.

But there are lots of other stuff that’s coming soon, and since I don’t want to spoil them, I won’t be able to answer any questions that requires me to include the spoilers.

If there’s anything you want to ask regarding any matters from the past chapters, comment below.

I’ll try my best to answer them without spoiling anything.

Lastly, thank you all for reading Tutorial up until now.

Also thanks to all readers who’ve not read my novel yet, but decided to read this. Thanks for your interest.

# Chapter 149 - Tutorial 25th Floor

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[Round 22, 2nd day. 12:20]

I heard the sonorous sound of trumpets and saw humans from afar, appearing as ants from a distance, lining up and preparing their battle formations.

In the vast plains, the two opposing armies prepare for their battle at noon.

It looks like it's finally begun.

The 25th floor was the first solo stage in the last five stages.

The theme revolved around choosing between two armies of similar strength and attaining victory for the army of your choice.

You would have to not only battle, but command, interact with the army, and exert your influence on them.

You'd need the ability to grasp people's' hearts, whether it be by a silver tongue or through acting.

They're skills I don't have.

They're skills I never really needed.

I went to the two armies and rather than get involved, I chose one and sat atop the rocky mountains that had a great view of the plains and passed time.

Even if I'm not there, the two armies will clash anyway.

The two armies each had a flag: a blue and a red flag.

The two conflicting colors divided the two armies and I just arbitrarily chose the red flag.

I heard the sound of the trumpets once more and the sound of rolling drums followed by battle cries.

The two armies' battle lines began to move.

Since the plains were so vast, it seemed like they would need more time before they fully began their conflict.

Rather than pointlessly watching them, I answered a message.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Hey, why won't you respond? If you're busy, should I contact you later?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: No. What's wrong?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Amongst the newbies that just entered this round, one of them had some interesting info.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: What kind of information?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: There're 3 people in China who have cleared the Tutorial. 3.]

It certainly was interesting.

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: What floor is Park Min on?]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: 90th floor.]

In the Korean server, Park Min was the challenger who had reached the highest floor on the Easy Difficulty.

In order to clear safely, he had intentionally delayed his progression, so he still had more than 10 floors left.

[Kang Min Hyuk, 30th floor: To be honest, there's no proof that those people have cleared the Tutorial yet. It's just that apparently, three supermen appeared that fought barehanded against monsters in China. But yeah... I heard a bit of the interview. After hearing them talk about their weapons or their tips about hunting monsters, it seems like they really were challengers who cleared the Tutorial. It looks like the Chinese government is treating them like war heroes and using them for propaganda.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: They're lucky, it seems like they got the government to acknowledge them. Normally, they'd fly to straight to either a torture chamber or a lab.]

There may be challengers in other countries who have cleared the tutorial. We don't know.

They just weren't apparent at a moment's glance or perhaps the country is hiding them.

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: Well, it's not bad. Now there's less work for us to do.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Yeah. Since we became the second movers, we don't have to explain the role of the Tutorial anymore.]

Through competition, we became aware of the existence of foreign servers, but people expected the first graduates of the Tutorial to come out of Korea.

Korea's progress, compared to other countries, was overwhelming, and since the beginning, Korea had created a stable system that would allow challengers to develop more quickly.

I thought we were definitely ahead compared to challengers from other countries.

That might be true.

Even before I had cleared the 12th floor, the Order of Vigilance had already been preparing for the Tutorial's aftermath .

They made plans to persuade the Korean government and they were collecting letters to send to their families.

The Order of Vigilance had supported Lee Chan Yong, who had been the top player at the time. However, in the meantime, his clear speed had been conversely getting slower compared to other challengers.

Lee Chan Yong was resolute in clearing the Tutorial so the Order of Vigilance had wanted to get him out quickly. Even if the other challengers' progress was somewhat slow, the Order of Vigilance wanted them to clear safely.

At the same time, several people wanted to clear the Tutorial and

go back to the outside world.

In many ways, it wasn't a bad plan and the plan seemed to be progressing smoothly.

However, within a few rounds, Lee Chan Yong, the one they expected to clear the Tutorial, just stopped and their plan went awry.

There were a lot of Easy difficulty challengers who could replace Lee Chan Yong. These challengers only lagged behind him by around 10 floors.

What's worse, because of Lee Chan Yong's disastrous failure, his clear speed slowed exponentially.

Because of that, the other top player, Park Min also remained on the 90th floor.

[Kang Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Now that it's become like this, they'll just wait for the challengers behind them to catch up to the 90th floor and they'll all work together to clear it and get out together.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: That'd probably be good. Well, do you as please.]

I listened closely, but it wasn't something I could decide on from the start.

Honestly, it wasn't really the kind of talk I would be interested in...

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: . . . I will do as I please. How about you? When do you think you'll clear the 25th floor?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 25th floor: Today.]

The infantry clashed as arrows and magic flew above their heads. I could see the cavalry tearing through the battlefield.

Although the battle was far away, I could feel its intensity from

here.

I could hear their battle cries and their feet tapping on the ground from this faraway on the summit of the rocky mountain.

[Soul Siphon]

[Overpower] (Coercion)

It was enough for me to just use these two skills.

I invoked Soul Siphon across a wide area and the enemy soldiers' physical prowess declined.

They experienced a feeling of helplessness and they cowered.

It's easy to think about how deadly this skill is when I see the scene in front of me.

The front line is collapsing.

Even though the soldiers had similar abilities, the red soldiers won one-sidedly when they were pitted against the blue soldiers..

This phenomena was simultaneously occurring all over the battlefield.

[PR Note: "Coercion" skill will now be known as "Overpower"].

Plus, I'm also using the Overpower skill.

Unlike the Soul Siphon skill, Overpower uses my mana, though the enemies afflicted by Soul Siphon were quickly dying off anyway.

In this large scale battle, I'll never run out of mana.

[Talaria's Wings]

Since I'm already using two skills, one more wouldn't hurt.

Talaria's Wings doesn't simply afflict enemies. It was the God of Adventure's skill that affected allies and synergistically improved their fighting abilities.

Moreover, the red flag soldiers were fighting against a weakened



and intimidated enemy, cutting them down with greater ease than before.

They wouldn't even need to capture the battle line. Soon enough, the battle line started to crumble.

I could roughly see that before a single red flag soldier went down, they took at least 5 blue flag soldiers with them.

Even from afar, I could clearly see the front line collapsing.

It looked like the red army commander was authenticating it as well, since both of the armies were huge.

But there's no commander in the world that wouldn't want to ensure his victory, especially when the balance had abnormally tipped like now.

He watched their movements and turned his attention to the sword in his hand.

Kiri Kiri had once said that if my level reaches a certain point, I'll be able to get rewarded with level ups again.

However, Kiri Kiri withdrew her advice.

Due to my growth rate, she said that I wouldn't be able to get any level-up rewards from now on.

Also, she told me to stop being interested in levels and just concentrate on my own growth.

My methods of growth are limited.

First, I can raise my resistances.

It's something I've done up till now.

The other is to study and master what I don't know.

One example is magic.

However, Kiri Kiri said I'd have to be at least at the 30th floor before I get anything regarding magic.

Therefore, I started train myself in swordsmanship.

My swordsmanship was definitely a limiting factor to my combat style.

Up till now, I had used my extreme speed and reflexes to cut down my opponents but technically, there weren't many strong opponents.

If I exclude my fights with fellow challengers, my weapon skills always lagged behind my opponents.

The fact that I got my sword skills to the intermediate level without any sort of study is amazing.

Even when comparing myself to the community, there aren't a lot of people with intermediate-level swordsmanship.

And there wasn't anyone with a higher swordsmanship level than me.

However, now I could see the limit to my swordsmanship.

Should I say that I see a wall?

Similar to how I didn't have a definite form for my swordsmanship, I also didn't know how to improve my swordsmanship itself. Based on the situation and on my condition, I would slightly alter my swordsmanship style during battle.

It could become an advantage, but there was certainly a limit to it because I couldn't progress any further with that style.

Therefore, I diligently studied the swordsmanship of the knight from the 16th floor.

It was a passive style designed for defense.

It occasionally employed feints but the feints were simply used to buy time for the final deathblow.

The young knight's swordsmanship was definitely untried in real combat.

That's how I assessed his swordsmanship.

Even so, there were a few useful things, like the three moves leading up to the final lethal technique.

Because of that, I was able to learn the method of storing my mana into my sword and ejecting it out in front of me. I also learned how to handle aura.

As I got better at handling aura, I decided that there was nothing more that I could learn from the knight's swordsmanship.

However, on the 19th floor, when I just mindlessly tried the techniques, I realized they were fairly useful techniques.

My sword skill level improved to a higher level.

Perhaps I just hadn't realized the true value of this swordsmanship until now.

Whenever I thought that way, I would practice my swordsmanship diligently.

I swung my Thousand Arms in the form of a longsword, and started with the basic movements.

Of course, it was a defensive style that didn't match my style at all.

Whenever I practiced the knight's swordsmanship, I didn't feel like my skill improved. Rather, I just felt that I wouldn't be able to use his swordsmanship in a real fight.

In no time at all, the battle was finishing up.

The red flag army was now one-sidedly slaughtering the enemy.

Unusually, the quickly crumbling blue flag army wasn't retreating but still holding their positions.

Of course, because they were being pushed back, there were a lot of deserters breaking away from the battlefield but the army's

military headquarters stayed in the same place.

Also, in front of those headquarters, an iron giant rose.

Guoh.

The giant's horrible shriek echoed all the way to the mountains.

The attacking red flag army simply stopped.

Even if I catch a glimpse from here, it was big enough to be over five or six meters tall.

It wasn't something that could be taken on by just normal soldiers.

Based on Kiri Kiri's information, she said the that golem, no matter what side the challenger chooses, appears on the side that the challenger didn't pick.

Then, that golem might be the actual challenge for the 25th floor.

I flew with Talaria's wings.

I flew with my maximum speed towards the golem and thought.

The style of swordsmanship I learned from the knight had a finishing move that ended at the sequence of three corresponding moves.

The final three moves could be called the core of the style, but the actual explanation on the final technique was far too general.

Because of that, I fumbled through his teachings and I hadn't been able to properly manifest aura, and sometimes my mana would even wildly eject from my sword.

I thought that the final technique was to simply manifest an aura blade and that I just needed to swing my sword at the right timing.

Because of that, I heard about the 11-19 forms related to the three final forms from the knight, but I hadn't listened attentively.

I just thought he was just telling me the method to use aura.

Since it had splendid movements and had really technical names. That was what I thought when I saw the knight try to act all cool. But I could trust the knight now.

The several techniques he had taught me were all in preparation for the final technique. Future swordsmen would have to use their own methods to interpret the skills in a way appropriate for them.

It was really a relief, because even though I told the talkative swordsman that I didn't need to hear his explanation, he still told me all about the techniques in detail.

At some point, I had flown into the vicinity of the golem.

Seeing the battlefield up close, it felt a bit different from when I looked at it from the mountaintop.

I had seen this many times; people tangled in a war, fighting on the battlefield.

There would always be chaos in the center of the battlefield but this was a first.

The majority of the two armies remained and continued to fight. I guess I just had to accept that this was really happening.

There wasn't anything really unusual.

The red flag soldiers that had advanced towards the golem were quickly being torn down.

The blue flag soldiers, at some point, had reorganized their ranks and matched the golem's steps and slowly advanced forward.

I didn't slow down my flight speed and rotated vertically, aiming for the golem's head.

Before I collided with it, I swung my sword.

It wasn't difficult.

There wasn't much of a difference from the moment I swung my sword and the moments my blows landed, light glinting off its

edges.

Fire blazed along the trajectory of my sword but a protective coating formed on the golem, blocking my sword.

However, the protective coating couldn't slow my sword for even a second.

My sword split the protective coating, and fell upon the golem's head unimpeded.

I adjusted my falling speed and cut straight down from the head down to the its abdomen.

I cut the golem into a smooth cross section like I was cutting tofu, and the golem crumbled as both of its pieces collapsed onto the ground.

When the enormous golem fell, it let out a deafening roar along with a huge dust cloud from the impact of the collapsed parts on the earth..

The two armies retreated quickly so they wouldn't be buried by its remains.

During that time, I examined the golem's body.

Tiny flames were stuck to the cross-section.

I relaxed a bit after I scrutinized the flames on the surface of the metal golem.

Still, I had gotten a lot better.

It felt like I had been rewarded for my hard work for weeks.

I felt lighthearted and turned my head, to meet the dazed faces of the blue flag soldiers.

It was simple to take care of the remnants.

Before the golem appeared, the blue flag army was being helplessly pushed back.

As soon as I entered the battlefield, the golem was split into 2

pieces and the golem collapsed just like that.

Rather, it took longer to finish off the deserters from the beginning of the battle.

I took care of the last soldier hiding under a corpse and a message appeared.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 25th Floor, Clear.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 5000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 5000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 2300 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 700 points have been deducted.]

[Based on your play records, additional rewards will be given.]

[You have acquired the skill, Time Confinement Lv. Max.]

[Battle Concentration Lv. 28 and Time Confinement Lv. Max have been integrated.]

This stage was much easier than I had expected.

Perhaps because of that, there weren't many extreme reactions from the gods.

From the start, from the mountaintop alone, I practiced my swordsmanship and then I swung my sword a few times before the stage ended.

The unusual point was the skill I had received from the clear.

Time Confinement.

Looking at the level of the skill, it was a skill given to me by the gods.

Let's take a look.

[Time Confinement (Lv. Max)]

Explanation: A god who wouldn't say his/her name has given you this skill as a present.

If you don't figure out her name, she may get angry at you.

This is a skill from the God of Slowness.

She didn't explain how the skill works, but it said that she'd get angry or something, so it was definitely her.

The God of Slowness had given me a skill on the 2nd floor and had offered an opportunity for me to become her disciple on the 6th floor. Including this, she had given me two skills as presents.

The God of Slowness had used all her chances to give a challenger a skill, so it looked like she had used a trick and hid her name to give me an extra skill.

Whenever a god showed interest in me, the God of Slowness would sometimes get anxious. I bet I'm right.

This skill is, just as the name implies, based on time.

If we look at the fact that Battle Concentration was integrated into it, it looks like it has a connection to my level of focus.

I'll ask Kiri Kiri for a more in-depth explanation.

[The God of Slowness is satisfied.]

It looks like it was definitely a skill gifted to me by the God of Slowness.

In any case, I attained another skill from a god.

You're the best, God of Slowness.

[The God of Adventure grumbled.]

Besides the sound of someone grumbling, a portal appeared from the ground and I stepped onto the portal.



"Transport."

From a loud and chaotic battlefield, I was transported to a quiet and peaceful field.

I saw Kiri Kiri squatting down in the middle of the green field.

Unlike the usual Kiri Kiri, she turned her back halfway towards me and was sitting down.

Kiri Kiri turned her head and stared at me.

She looked like she was sulking.

"Heng!"

Kiri Kiri, who momentarily locked her gaze with mine, snorted and turned her head around.

# Chapter 150 - Tutorial 26th Floor (1)

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"Kiri Kiri."

"What?" Kiri Kiri asked curtly, with her back turned.

Her response was quite terse, cold, and sharp.

But how sharp could Kiri Kiri's voice be? I mean, c'mon, it's Kiri Kiri.

It just sounds like a little kid sulking at me.

That's actually how it is anyway.

"How many days did you say it would take to clear the 25th floor again?" I asked, turning her body to face me and looking squarely at her face.

Kiri Kiri and I made a simple bet.

It didn't really have much meaning behind it.

But there was a problem: what we bet.

If Kiri Kiri won, I would buy her as many cakes as she wanted.

Conversely, if I won, I wouldn't buy her anything.

"5 days."

"How many days have passed since? From the day that I started 25th floor?"

"2 days! Heung!"

When she finished speaking, she turned her head away from me.

Doesn't your neck hurt?

I moved in front of her and she once again turned her back on me.

She turned away again, so instead of speaking to her face, I just spoke to her back.

"How long do you think the next floor will take? Let's try and get it right this time."

"Heng. The next floor should be tough for Hooooojae. It should take at least more than a month. 33 days," she said, laughing sardonically.

33 days, huh . . .

One round will pass after 30 days.

"Starting from the 26th floor, even if one round passes, you won't fail the stage. It's just that when the round is over, you'll be forced back into the waiting room, and you'll start off at the place where you ended the last round."

To put it simply, you don't start over when the round is over, but you continue from where you left off.

"Exactly."

It looks like the difficulty went up.

When the round is over, you wouldn't start all the way from the beginning. So it wasn't bad from the challenger's perspective.

I had experienced the past rounds and now, I could conquer these stages more safely and comfortably.

Of course, starting over from the beginning of the round was annoying, but in the Tutorial, safety was paramount.

What would it be like if it truly was like that, where when the round finishes, the next round starts up where you left off?

If you're conquering the stage with relatively little difficulty, then you can just continue on in the same way.

However, what if you messed up?

You wouldn't get a chance to go back from the beginning and you'd have to continue the chosen route.

There's never a reset, so there's a chance that you could be stuck

on one stage forever.

That danger had already been proven by Lee Chan Yong.

You won't be able to fix the mistakes of your attempt and you'll fall into hell.

"Is it a party stage?"

"The 25th floor is normal. Even if you gathered the 25 challengers, it would take about 2-3 months. There's no way you can clear it within 33 days," Kiri Kiri finished, laughing.

She laughed like a childish Disney villain.

She looked happy; it's probably because she doesn't expect me to clear the stage on time, so she'll get free cake from the bet.

"I won't be able to buy you any cakes for about a month then, huh?"

Her back turned, the sitting shoulders of Kiri Kiri's flinched.

[Welcome to the 26th floor waiting room.]

[Round 22, Day 2. 10:20 P.M. (22:20)]

I got information on the next stage and information on my Time Confinement skill from Kiri Kiri, and went into the waiting room.

Kiri Kiri was distressed because if my clear time was too slow, she wouldn't be able to eat cake during that long period of time I was on the stage, but if I was too fast in clearing the stage, she still wouldn't be able to eat cake because of the bet.

However, in the end, she was swayed by my sweet talk and she affably explained the next stage.

I also actually gave her some candy.

Now, let's look at the explanation for my Time Confinement skill.

[Time Confinement (Lv.Max)]

Explanation: Stops the flow of time.

During the frozen time, only the user's thoughts can move freely.

The speed at which thoughts are processed depends on the user's ability.

A god who wouldn't say her name has given you this skill as a present.

If you don't figure out her name, she may get angry at you.

It wasn't a really detailed explanation but I got the gist of it.

It stops time, and during that time, only the user's thoughts can act.

Also, during the paused time, how fast the thoughts are processed depends on the user's concentration.

If you lack concentration, you may not even be cognizant during the frozen time.

Even though it's a skill that doesn't require the caster's mana or stamina, it stresses the user's natural ability.

I remembered something that Kiri Kiri had said about the God of Slowness some time ago.

Then, let's test the skill first.

I transformed the Thousand Arms into a sphere and threw the Thousand Arms as high as the eye could see.

When the Thousand Arms began to descend to the ground, I watched the Thousand Arms closely and activated my skill.

[Time Confinement]

When I activated the skill, the Thousands Arms stopped in place.

Rather than just slowing down time, it actually froze time.

I calmly surveyed the area for any signs of movement and then . .

.

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6 . . .

10832. 10833. 108 . . .

While I was counting, I heard a ringing noise in my head, and the frozen Thousand Arms resumed falling.

I quickly positioned my hands and caught the falling Thousand Arms.

10800 seconds.

If we take into account the margin of error, the Time Confinement skill can last for roughly 3 hours.

Next up, I needed to see if the Thousand Arms actually moved.

While Time Confinement was active, the Thousand Arms wasn't still.

It moved little by little.

Within 3 hours, the Thousand Arms fell by 1 cm.

It seemed like it didn't move at all, but it wasn't a complete freezing of time.

Three hours...

Hm...

In the past, Kiri Kiri said that a human shouldn't become a disciple to the God of Slowness.

Now I understand that statement a little.

How could it be 3 hours . . .

Honestly, this skill was closer to an instrument of torture.

Time stop.

What an attractive term.

The problem is, that even I would be frozen in that stopped world.

Only my thoughts would remain, and I would be locked in the frozen world.

I suffered immensely on the 13th floor, so I knew exactly the fearsome power this skill contained.

Someone who is losing their mind wouldn't be able to last for three hours under this skill. You even lose your sense of time and only your thoughts would be able to scream out in the frozen world.

If a human being is locked away in solitary confinement for even a few days, they'd go crazy.

The Time Confinement skill, if used carelessly, wouldn't simply leave you with one or two mental diseases, but could even drive you to attempt suicide.

Of course, this is the case for the average human.

For me, it's a pretty good skill.

During the three hours of the skill, I could maintain my concentration.

I could match the timing of the skill, starting my next move right as the Time Confinement skill ends.

I got a really good skill.

Lately, my concentration has improved immensely, to the point where the Battle Concentration skill was meaningless to me now.

Even if I didn't use the skill, I could maintain the same level of concentration that the skill granted whenever I wanted.

If I wanted to, I could concentrate on a higher level than with the Battle Concentration skill activated.

However, it wasn't on the level of the Time Confinement skill.

The fact that I could use the Time Confinement skill to artificially stop time and allow me to process my thoughts during a

pressing battle was a tremendous advantage.

[The God of Adventure is grumbling.]

I got the skill from the God of Slowness, so why do I keep getting messages from the God of Adventure?

I turned the Thousand Arms in my hand back into the form of a longsword.

The Time Confinement skill seemed not only useful as a tool for combat but also useful as a tool for training.

Actually, the skill isn't really different from the Hyperbolic Time Chamber.

Though I can't move my body, I can improve my abilities with just my thoughts.

What's worse, since it's a god skill, it doesn't cost any mana or or anything else, for the matter.

[Time Confinement]

[Round 22, Day 6. 3:30 (15:30)]

[Welcome to the 26th floor stage.]

I spent a few days using Time Confinement to finish off my training and proceeded to the 26th floor stage.

I could've spent some more time on my training but I thought it was more important to attempt the stage and grow.

During my attempt on the stage, I could also use Time Confinement to train too.

I passed through a room with a bonfire. The stage was quite a bit different compared to the usual stages.

Lights shined in front of my eyes.

I looked at the ceiling and saw a giant chandelier up on the high ceiling.



I haven't even seen a chandelier that large in the outside world.

The interior of the building was made of marble.

From the ceiling, to the walls, the columns, and even the floor.

The interior stuck out since it was decorated here and there with gold and jewels.

There was a soft, red carpet over the floor.

Besides me, there were more than 100 men gathered and standing on the carpet.

Each of them had sparkling weapons and armor readied.

On both sides of the carpet, soldiers wearing armor were lined up. Beyond them, I saw old men wearing long, baggy clothes.

I turned around.

There was a giant gate at the end of the carpet. It looked like it was the entrance to the building. The gate was large enough such that the 25th floor golem could pass through it.

I turned around, looking at the direction opposite of the gate.

The carpet continued on towards a platform.

At the top of the platform, there was a splendid throne.

Also, a man, wearing clothes of the same splendor as the throne, sat upon it.

He's either a king or an emperor. Well, he must be one of the two.

He looked like one of those kind old men who ran the neighborhood bakery.

Firstly, there were a lot of people in my surroundings, but there wasn't any signs of danger.

There wasn't any killing intent or fighting spirit; plus, there wasn't anyone strong enough to post a threat to me.

I was quietly analyzing out the situation and waited for the message that would tell me the stage's objective, but I saw the old bakery man looking embarrassed.

[PR Note: If you haven't noticed, Hojae adopts the emperor's name as the "old bakery man."]

"You . . . why were you summoned alone?"

Summoned?

The surrounding whispers got louder after he asked his question.

It looks like they're talking about me.

A mix of the words "warrior," "summoning," "failure," "god," "qualification," and "demon king" from the surrounding crowd were overpowering my ears.

Ah, I see what they're talking about.

It's that.

It's this world's story of the hero versus the demon king.

This world's natives would summon a warrior to oppose the demon king, requesting for him to defeat the Demon King. That kind of cliché.

It was palace so grand and magnificent that I could spend spend all the wealth I wanted to and still have money to spare, but what was actually important was that they would summon completely unrelated people to solve their problems.

After they kill the Demon King, they'll try to kill the hero or he'll be married to some unimportant, alienated princess to end their agreement. It was that kind of story.

It might be different if the princess was at least pretty, but if the hero didn't like the princess, the hero, from the reader's perspective, would've been nothing but a scapegoat; someone who they push all their problems to.

It was so cliché that I could figure out this situation immediately.

I could even understand why the 100 people were gathered below the platform.

The stage recommended a 25-person party, so it seems like it was set up so that 25 warriors were summoned in order to form a party.

"WWarrior. Where are your colleagues? Were you truly the only one summoned?"

I wanted to say something back to the old man who kept repeating himself, but a message popped up in front of my eyes.

[The 26th floor challenge is starting.]

Explanation: Half of the Heiog continent has been conquered by the demons, and it has been 35 years since the Humans declared war on them.

Sometimes, the demons would acquire victory, and sometimes the humans would.

The long, protracted war has devastated the continent as both human and demon casualties rose astronomically.

2 years ago, the demons found a way to end the war.

They summoned a being their distant ancestors worshipped: the one who rules hell, the Demon King.

Because the ceremony had been active over the past two years, there isn't much time until the Demon King descends on the world.

The empire would take care of the Demon King, but in order for them to defeat the demons, they summoned a warrior from another world.

Of the summoned warriors, only the qualified individual may awaken the sealed holy sword and use its power to defeat the Demon King.

Warrior.

As a warrior that will save this world, prove your worthiness, and lift the holy sword's seal.

Only that way, can you defeat the Demon King.

[Clear conditions]

1. Acquire the unsealed Holy Sword.
2. Defeat the Demon King.

"Open your mouth. Say something, Warrior. Were you truly summoned by yourself?"

## Chapter 151 - Tutorial 26th Floor (2)

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[I'm not going to ignore you because you're a woman. I won't laugh in front of your face. But I can't believe it. Was it the same for you, mister?]

[I wonder. I don't really remember that kind of thing that well. Rather, regarding the Demon King that emerges on that stage...]

[You're really just ignoring me. You're making me feel bad by just differentiating treatment of the trivial things like your accommodations or your food.]

[I see, so that's how it was. So about that Demon King.]

[Mister, do you know what happened just moment ago? You see, I...]

[...]

"Warrior, were you truly summoned by yourself?"

"Yeah, so?"

I roughly answered the old man's persistent question that he'd been asking me for some time.

So where's the holy sword?

It doesn't look like it's here in this brilliant place.

The conditions for clearing the 26th floor were to acquire the holy sword and defeat the Demon King.

The prerequisites for defeating the Demon King aren't complete just by acquiring the holy sword.

In any case, I need to acquire the holy sword to defeat the Demon King, and then I'll be able to clear the stage.

However, there's been a continuous uproar in the background.

As I look at my surroundings, I saw the flushed faces of the old men on the two ends, asking each other 'what happened'.

They weren't women and they were really old grandpas, yet their faces were so flushed that it wasn't really a good sight for my eyes.

Let's ask them why they're acting like that.

"Even though he's a summoned warrior, to be so rude and flippant..."

"There was definitely an issue with the summoning. If that wasn't the case, there's no way that only one person would be summoned. In fact, he looks like a troublemaker . . ."

Yep. I don't need to hear this.

It would be best if I just ignore them and find the holy sword.

Firstly, it doesn't look like it's in this palace.

I'll disperse a little bit of my mana and see if I can detect the holy sword.

With that thought in mind, I drew out some of my mana.

"Look here, enough of that."

While I was activating my magic circuits, someone to my side spoke to me.

He was was 190 cm tall, had a greatsword tied to his back, and wore armor from head to toe. He also had a great deal of mana in his body.

Considering that he's also standing atop the carpet like me, he must also be one of the summoned warriors.

"If you recklessly draw out your mana here, then..."

Kwang!

I ignored the man's words continued to spread my mana, creating an explosive sound from the ground.

A faint, bright magic circle activated but suddenly stopped.

So it seems there was a magic circle drawn on the floor that

suppressed the activation of magic.

Though, it was a pretty poor magic circle.

I spread out my mana and waited for a minute, and was able to determine the holy sword's location.

It was located deep underground the castle, where the palace was located on top of.

It's there.

The holy sword was easy to find since it not only emitted powerful mana, but I could also feel the distinct presence of a god's power.

Whatever the case, I succeeded in finding the location of the holy sword.

I felt proud since I could sense improvement in my handling of mana.

I liked that I had achieved my primary objective, but I felt like the surrounding mood had changed a little.

The old men, who had been yelling for some time, all together closed their mouths, and the soldiers on the sides of the carpet put their hands to their swords, and advanced one step forward.

Also, the summoned warriors, who were standing atop the carpet, paled in fear.

All their attention was on me.

What is this?

"Why? What's wrong?"

I asked the man who had warned me just a moment ago.

I had only asked him since he was the closest one to me, but the man shook his head and stepped back.

"No, no, it's nothing."

At the end of his words, a heavy silence dropped onto the palace.

I felt bad because I realized too late that they were silent because I had destroyed the magic circle below my feet.

I was just awkwardly standing there and the old man rose from his throne.

"Warrior, thank you for accepting the empire's summon. I welcome you as the representative of the empire. We had originally intended to summon 25 warriors, but because you were summoned alone, there was a brief error. I apologize for not trusting you immediately. However, in this palace of the sky, the rule is that all use of magic is forbidden. Please refrain from using magic here."

I responded to the old man who had sincerely apologized first.

"Yes. Thank you for welcoming me. I apologize for hastily using magic here. Although it was defective, I destroyed the installed magic circle, so I apologize."

"...There's no way that that magic circle was defective but..." he trailed off and cleared his throat.

The old man put strength in his stomach and began speaking in a resounding voice.

"The five groups of heroes have finally been summoned here, to this Kuranubus. I am this empire's Emperor and as the sole ruler of this continent, I once again, welcome you. Just today, the great god accepted our desperate request from all the citizens of our empire and responded to us here, in the center of the empire, Kuranubus. Not for those barbaric, crafty demons, but for the empire's righteous cause..."

In contrast to his loud voice, he had an odd accent, and spoke very slowly.

Old man...No, the emperor. As I stood still and listened to the emperor, I felt a sense of déjà vu.



"I solemnly declare under the azure sky. The evil demons and the demon (Demon King) that they summoned, will fall to the holy sword which contains the great god's will. This is because the empire's will is the same as the god's will..."

That's strange. This sounds like something I've heard before.

His self-indulgence was written all over his face.

It wasn't any different from a principal's speech.

It seemed like he was talking about something really important, but but the contents didn't go into my head, and his speech made me tired for no special reason.

He kept on delivering a list of pointless words.

Instead of continuing to listen to him ramble on, I sent a message to Park Jung Ah.

[Lee Ho Jae, 26th floor: What's up?]

[Park Jung Ah, 47th floor: Clearing now.]

Clearing?

[Park Jung Ah, 47th floor: I'm in the middle of clearing a floor.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 26th floor: Ah, I see. I'll talk to you later then.]

[Park Jung Ah, 47th floor: Ok.]

It looks like she's busy.

Seeing as how she hung up, she might've actually been in the middle of a fight.

If that's truly the case, she didn't really need to respond to my message immediately.

She must be busy with her work with the Order of Vigilance, but Park Jung Ah is also clearing the Tutorial at the same time.

Currently, she's gotten up the 47th floor.

If we consider the fact that she allots most of her time to her work for the Order of Vigilance, Park Jung Ah and her party member's speed in clearing the Tutorial is on the faster side.

"From the castle in the sky, past the oceans and to the barren desert, all the citizens of the empire who live on this world..."

His speech is still going on.

It's kind of uncomfortable.

Is it because I continually used Time Confinement to train for a few days?

I had trained whilst maintaining a high degree of concentration, yet I had been alone.

There was nothing moving in my surroundings besides me and I pretty much couldn't move either.

But now, since I've come to such a bright, populated, and very noisy place, I felt uncomfortable and my attention was scattered.

What's worse is that even if I pay attention, the only thing I can hear is a useless speech.

"Once again, to all the warriors who accepted the empire's summons..."

"If it's the holy sword that contains the great god's power, even that wicked Demon King's plans..."

His speech still didn't end.

So... when exactly are you going to give us the holy sword?

After the boring speech in the palace, there was an even more tedious declaration ceremony that followed.

The summoned warriors altogether recited their script and repeatedly said how they received the blessing from the god.

The bestowment ceremony was next.

They conferred upon me a weird post and a medal, pointlessly

wasting valuable time. Next, I received clothes befitting my new post and was told that I got some territory somewhere on this continent.

After I attentively listened to the long history of that land, they declared that I would be conferred the aforementioned land, and soon it was time to express thanks for the land.

The more-than 100 warriors all finished the conferment ceremony and it quickly became very late in the afternoon.

After the emperor announced the end of the bestowment ceremony, I read my schedule and it said that it was now time for a simple dinner, accompanied by a social party for grandiose events.

Aristocratic-looking people began endlessly pouring into the palace from somewhere, and I got sick and tired of them, so I escaped to the outside of the palace.

I, who had escaped outside, was guided to my lodgings inside of the castle.

It was already late at night, so we would proceed with the rest of the events in my schedule tomorrow.

Would tomorrow's schedule be similar to today's? I felt really anxious.

I was guided to my lodging, a separate three floor building which resided inside the castle.

Perhaps it was meant as a place to stay for the group of 25 warriors, because it was far too big for me to use by myself.

I momentarily stopped in front of the main door.

I don't really like spaces like this that are humongous while also completely empty.

I'd have preferred it if they had given me a small single room instead.

While I thought that, I heard a knock from behind me and the

doors opened.

"Excuse me."

The person who had entered was an armorclad woman.

"Hello, how are you? I am Seregia Cromwell, head of the Kunon Knight Order."

"Yes. I am Lee Ho Jae. Nice to meet you."

"You can speak more comfortably around me, warrior."

"Yes. Of course."

It would still be kind of strange to speak so informally with her.

She had introduced herself as the head of the knight order, and she looked a few years older than me "From now on, our Kunon Knight Order will be responsible for guiding and protecting you, warrior. Until the day your mission is over, warrior, we'll work together with you. If you're perhaps curious about something or have something you need, just tell me anytime."

Listening to her, it sounded like she would act like a manager for me.

She would be responsible for both guiding me and protecting me.

It would also double as keeping a close eye on me.

"Then about that Kulon Knight Order."

"It's the Kunon Knight Order, warrior."

"How many knights of the Kunon Knight Order are responsible for me?"

"Just me."

How strange.

Just a moment ago, Seregia, the female knight, had introduced herself as the head of the Kunon Knight Order.

So only she, the head of the knight order, is responsible for me?

And of all the things she was assigned to do, she had to clean up after me?

Seregia must've seen doubt on my face so she followed up with an explanation.

"The truth is...The only member of the Kunon Knight Order is me."

So what you're saying is that you're the only member of the Kunon Knight Order and at the same time, you're its leader.

I wondered whether they could really attach the word 'order' to 'knight' when there was only one member.

"...Can you still call that an order of knights?"

"Yes, I can."

Seregia replied firmly.

It was a little ridiculous that she responded so confidently.

"I wasn't alone at the beginning. After the previous head of the knight order passed away, the ranks remained empty, that's all."

Wait a minute. Then you're saying that the entire knight order only consisted of you and the previous head?

So this knight order was a lot more amazing than I thought.

"So how did the previous knight leader die?"

"He passed away from old age."

"...That's unfortunate."

"He was over 90 years old when he died. That's quite the luxury."

"Yes. You're right."

Strangely, it seems like all the knights I've met all have a screw loose somewhere.

Is this a coincidence?

"No, I don't have a loose screw somewhere."

Seregia said, clearly and proudly.

So why are you responding so confidently?

I don't understand at all.

Honestly, the fact that she's the only one in the Kunon Knight Order is good news for me.

It means that there's only one piece of baggage that I have to lug around.

"Usually, the number of knights responsible for the group of warriors is at minimum, over 30. However, in your case, warrior, because you were uniquely summoned alone, it looks like I was assigned to you. Because of you, warrior, I have gotten my first mission since entering the knight order. It's truly an honor."

What? Did you just say your first mission?

"...Pardon me, but when did you first join the knight order?

"I joined four years ago."

"...If you didn't do anything for four years, it sounds like rather than being a knight, you were closer to being unemployed."

"I think so too."

That was when I started thinking that Seregia might be hurting under all that outward confidence.

I set aside my questions about the solitary knight order that she belonged to and rather, decided to ask her about more important matters.

"Then... For now, please tell me about my future schedule."

"Yes. I understand."

"So what you're saying is that from now on, for three days continuously, I have pretty much the same schedule as today, and then we start our real work?"

"Yes. Beginning on the fourth day, you will start your mission in

earnest. Also, of the ten missions, the warrior with the highest results will become the representative of the warrior group. They will be preferentially granted the qualification to be able to go through the holy sword's test."

"What's the holy sword's test?"

"Yes. There is a legend that not anyone can draw the holy sword. Pulling out the sword barehanded is the holy sword's test."

If it's a holy sword, that's naturally the kind of test it would be.

"Then, in order to be tested by the holy sword, what about the missions that we have to carry out?"

"I also do not know the details. Perhaps the missions haven't been decided yet, but it is probably a mission related to the war with the demons suppressing the monsters in our territory, or perhaps it will be a mission about pursuing the witches' forces.

So, the empire is going to first make us do this and that in order to suck us dry while taking all credit.

If they were to just pick the strongest warrior, there wouldn't be a need to do the inconvenient ten tasks.

They could just use duels or a competition in order to pick the strongest.

I don't like it at all.

You want me to just do as I'm told, but it's too much of a hassle.

## Chapter 152 - Tutorial 26th Floor (3)

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No matter how I plan it, there's no way I'll move according to the schedule Seregia told me about. It was cumbersome and it took too long, but that wasn't the main problem. I just wouldn't be able to take it.

Before the three days are up, I'll explode and start arguing with someone or I might even run away somewhere.

Ultimately, even when the mission starts, there would be no guarantee that it doesn't include empty formalities.

"Do you have a map?"

"Did you need a map? There should be one here. Please, come this way."

I followed Seregia, and we reached the living quarters. There was a huge map stuck to the wall.

This place seems to be a conference room, since there's a huge table in front of the wall with chairs arranged around it.

"Please wait for a moment. I need to first light a candle..."

I could see the map without light, but Seregia wouldn't be able to.

I heard her rummage for something in the dim room, so she must be looking for flint or a magical tool with similar uses.

But it's never easy to find something in the dark, especially when you didn't know where it was to begin with.

I spoke to Seregia, who was hurriedly looking through the drawer.

"It's fine. I'll do it."

I went up to the candle and used my magic.

"Fire."

I brought my finger that was emitting a tiny flame to the wick of



the candle and lit it.

I lit up around five candles and managed to illuminate the room.

"So you could use magic as well. You're truly amazing," Seregia complimented, with a somewhat embarrassed expression.

I've been steadily practicing magic, so I can use a little bit now.

I've only gotten to the point of using Fire, and Wind Arrow, but I'll only be able to master the rest once I get past the 30th floor and receive a new book about magic.

"Yes, well, that's how it is."

Honestly speaking, it felt great to be complimented but I acted indifferent.

"I didn't think you would be a Magic Swordsman. I heard that in order to become a Magic Swordsman, you need to be naturally talented and put in a lot of effort...Wait. One second, please."

Seregia stopped and asked.

"How did you know I was an inspector?"

[TL Note: We're aware this sounds weird. I believe the author wrote it like this to show you how quirky the character is. The above sentence about the Magic Swordsman also didn't really make much sense until we combined the sentences.]

"Are you not?" I replied.

"You're right."

Seregia just inadvertently revealed that she was an inspector. But how? There's nothing sticking out that says 'I'm an inspector!'.

She doesn't have a sword. She doesn't have a sheath or a sword rack either. Besides her light armor, she's completely unarmed.

After seeing my appearance and my magic just now, she should've assumed that I was a Magician, rather than a Magic Swordsman.

Even after I pointed that out, she stubbornly asked how I knew she was an investigator.

"Yes... well, I just knew. I knew when I saw the magic at your fingertips, and even by just looking at how your hands hang normally. You're right-handed, right? With a longsword about yay big," Seregia explained, stretching out her arms to indicate her assumed length of his longsword.

It was the length of the Thousand Arms longsword form that I often used.

"How do you know the length of my sword?" I asked.

"I saw it in the palace," Seregia said.

I don't remember drawing my sword in the palace.

"Could you please explain in greater detail?"

"I was also in the palace, so I was able to observe you, Warrior. I realized that you have three 'intervals.'"

[PR Note: These "intervals" are actually attack ranges or the distance between him and his enemies. Think about 3 concentric circles with Ho Jae at the center. The three different "zones" represent his attack "intervals." Depending on which ring the enemy is in, Ho Jae's reaction will differ. slightly.]

"What 'intervals' are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about the intervals of your attack ranges. Firstly, from this short distance, within that interval, when another warrior has closed in, you would have immediately reacted. As your left foot stepped back this way, you would be able to react immediately. The next interval is about the distance between me and you right now. Say another warrior is about this far away. I'd say it's a range where you would be able to swing your sword after taking a single step. Then, based on your stance and the fact that you're right-handed, it'd be a sword, about this long."

After I listened to Seregia's in-depth explanation, I saw her differently.

When we had first entered the estate, she had conversed with me but had never once stepped into the range of my sword.

She had accurately measured my effective range and she had always maintained a half-step away from it. Even now, she kept her distance.

She's a genius.

Seregia's physical strength or her mana capacity may fall short to the warriors in the palace, but the level of her natural ability wasn't lacking compared to theirs; it might actually be far superior.

Her genius-like ability wasn't something just anyone could attain.

She was born with that ability.

It doesn't simply end with a detective-like observational ability.

That ability could be used on herself as well as against an opponent that she's fighting against.

"Okay, then what is my third effective range?" I asked.

"I felt it when you spread out your mana, Warrior. Because I'm not strong enough, I don't know for certain, but it easily includes everything within the Emperor's vicinity at the bare minimum."

I thought she'd just be a burden, but it turns out she has abilities.

"You're quite amazing," I said.

\*

"This mountaintop will be the place where the Demon King awakens," Seregia said.

"How long will it take to go from here to the top of the mountain?" I asked.

"Even if we go by horseback, it should take at least four months."

It was much farther than I thought.

"Once you acquire the holy sword, you should be able to use the teleport magic circle to travel to the Bulut Fort. The Bulut Fortress is close to the frontlines and is also the closest teleportable location from here."

"Then how long will it take if we go from the fort?"

"It should take a bit more than half a month."

Kiri Kiri had assured me that I would never be able to clear the 26th floor within a month . Now I understood why. There were too many empty formalities and procedures to go through.

The stage's setting was much too large.

I didn't think it would take this much time just getting there.

"Can I freely use that teleportation circle?"

"Yes, you can, but it's not in your schedule."

So I can use it.

It seems like I'll have to skip parts of the story.

Supposedly, I'll acquire the holy sword after I finish the missions, and defeat the Demon King. Yeah, no. Rather than following that storyline, I'll just defeat the Demon King myself. Yeah, that'd be better.

Acquiring the holy sword and defeating the Demon King should be enough to clear the stage.

"Knight Leader," I said.

"You can use my name," Seregia said.

"Then may I call you the Lady Cromwell?"

"You can call me Seri."

"...Lady Seregia."

"Yes, Warrior?"

It's strangely difficult to maintain a conversation with this woman. She's fickle and she oddly seems to miss the point.

"For the next few days, I really don't think I'll need my schedule," I said.

"Yes, I agree," Seregia replied.

"So for the next three days, I'll visit the Bulut Fort. I'll go reconnoiter our enemies and prepare for the upcoming battle. I believe that would be more useful to us."

"Yes, I understand. Then I'll prepare the teleportation magic circle for you. Will you leave tomorrow morning?" she responded naturally, maintaining her characteristic poker face.

I was a bit taken aback since she was so straightforward.

Strangely, there were a lot of events that agitated me today.

"Isn't it against the rules to go off-schedule?"

"Of course it's not allowed."

"Then shouldn't you be stopping me, Lady Seregia?"

I had thought she would stop me, so I had formulated various excuses and I had even thought about threatening her if that didn't work out, but...

"I'll report that I had tried my best to stop you, but that I failed," Seregia said.

"...Ok, do as you wish."

It turned out for the best. Her actions wouldn't harm me, either.

She said she would make the preparations herself, so what is there to complain about?

Although it felt awkward, I decided to ask for another favor.

She said she would fulfill all of my requests, so let's see if she was

telling the truth.

"Lady Seregia, then can you teach me some swordsmanship?" I asked.

"Did you say swordsmanship?"

"Yes, I'd like to see this world's swordsmanship."

Seregia briefly pondered on it before responding.

"I'm sorry, but I don't think I can. Because the Kunon Knight Order belongs to the royal family, it is forbidden for me to teach an outsider our swordsmanship," Seregia replied.

I recollected the knight on the 16th floor.

The knight had eagerly taught him the essence of the royal swordsmanship as if he was passing out snacks.

"Teaching our swordsmanship to outsiders is such a grave offense that if others were to find out, there would be severe punishments, like being exiled to the Kunon Knight Order. Since I'm the only member of the Kunon Knight Order, they may confiscate my wealth, so it would be difficult to just hand over the kingdom's swordsmanship."

[PR Note: Apparently, being sent to the Kunon Knight Order is implied as a PUNISHMENT.]

...Were you exiled to the Kunon Knight Order?

I didn't think it was such a severe punishment.

Since I gave her an unreasonable request, I apologized.

Also, I thought that it was quite unfortunate that she had been exiled to the Kunon Knight Order.

"It's alright. I get paid each month."

"I see... Then I'll see you tomorrow morning?"

"Yes. I'll finish the preparations and come pick you up tomorrow morning. Good night."

Seregia finished her goodbyes and left the residence.

She was a complex person in many ways. That had been our confounding first encounter.

\*

After I had parted with Seregia, I used my Sneak skill and left the residence.

There didn't seem to be anyone with the ability to sense my presence in the vicinity.

Plus, I had used my Sneak skill, so I wasn't worried that anyone would find me.

I arrived in the castle's basement without interference. The castle's basement contained the sleeping holy sword.

There were soldiers guarding the center passageway, but when they briefly turned their attention elsewhere, I seized the opportunity and passed by them.

The holy sword was at the end of the passageway. It was stuck inside of a magic circle on the floor.

It was wildly spurting out mana and within that mana, I could feel a small trace of a God. It was definitely the holy sword.

As I got close, the holy sword hummed and began vibrating. The surrounding mana vibrated as well.

It's just a sword... how could this be happening?

I felt an overwhelming amount of mana coming from the sword.

If this was a person rather than a sword, I wouldn't think twice before fighting him.

I grabbed the continuously humming holy sword with my right hand and drew it.

It didn't really feel like a holy sword and I just drew it from the floor.

I think I passed the holy sword's test?

[Warrior.]

A voice rang out in my head. It was the voice of a big, middle-aged man. He sounded like a narrator from a documentary.

[Warrior, can you hear me?]

It must be this sword's voice.

[Warrior, can you hear me?]

The dignified, middle-aged voice continuously asked.

If it could talk, they should've made it a girl's voice.

[Warrior, please listen to me. Please. Please . . .]

"I'm listening."

[Oh! Dear God, thank you very much! Warrior, why didn't you respond immediately? Did you know how surprised I was?]

What a talkative sword. Should I say that it's a sword with an ego?

"You're the holy sword, right?"

[Yes, of course. I am truly the holy sword. To be exact, I am a magic sword imbued with the sword spirit, Ahoubuch. I am a sword with a blessing from the great god of the blue skies. Wow. It feels great to talk after such a long time!]

"Ahoubuch?"

[That's my name, Warrior. You have my respect, Warrior. I love you, Warrior.]

It was quite the affable sword.

It did have one flaw, though.

It said it loved me with a man's voice... when I heard that, I felt goosebumps.

"By the way, don't most of the spirits in swords have a female



voice?"

[...My apologies. When I was still a human, I was born as a man.]

So he was a human before.

I wonder how he became a sword spirit.

[I'll try harder, Warrior. Like this, or like this. Shall I try to make my voice cuter?]

"No, don't, before I stick you back into the ground."

[Yes. I'm sorry, Warrior. Please don't put me back, Warrior. This is the first time I'm speaking to someone in 200 years, Warrior. Please.]

It seems like he wasn't normal even when he was a human.

The holy sword suddenly became serious, speaking calmly.

[Warrior, could you please tell me your name?]

"Lee Ho Jae."

[Yes. Warrior Lee Ho Jae, you should now be able to handle the holy sword's power. If we're together, we can defeat any wicked foe. Normally, whenever you're in danger, I'm supposed to tell you my hidden abilities one by one, but since you're the warrior who pulled me out after no less than 200 years, I'll specially tell you all my abilities from the start. First . . ."

While the holy sword told me about its abilities, I thought about the stage's difficulty.

The first mission, acquiring the holy sword was so...boring.

Perhaps acquiring the holy sword is supposed to be difficult.

If that's true, it's somewhat regrettable that I passed the mission this easily.

[...Next, justice! Love! Friendship! Cry out those words and I will shine light. With that, the magic will be invoked.]

"What would happen to an unqualified person who tried to draw you?" I asked, cutting off the holy sword.

[I'm sorry? An unqualified person? They just wouldn't be able to pull me out. And they would feel a little pain in their grip. That's all.]

"How do you determine who's qualified?"

[I determine who is qualified by their fundamental abilities. You must also be acknowledged by many gods and you must be able to handle your mana in various ways. That's because I'm fundamentally a magic sword. Of course, you must also have a certain mastery of swordsmanship.]

They're terribly specific conditions: basic abilities, being acknowledged by the gods, handling mana, and swordsmanship.

The holy sword had somewhat explained the criteria for drawing it, but it couldn't be that simple.

All those skills must be extraordinary.

Amongst them, the most difficult condition was knowing swordsmanship.

What if a challenger for the 26th floor didn't know how to use a sword? What are they supposed to do?

Of course, it's supposed to be a party stage with a 25 person party, so at least one of them should be able to handle a sword. Maybe it's purposely set up like that.

But using common sense...

How the hell are 25 people going to get up to the 26th floor on Hell Difficulty?

The next challenger will definitely have to take on the 26th floor alone.

And if they're not proficient with a sword, they'll have to stay on the 26th floor and practice their swordsmanship.

What's worse, there's no reset on this stage.

Seriously, the difficulty is way too damn high.

Lee Hyung Jin only focuses on daggers, so even if I wanted to warn him now...

He might barely be able to use swords, but a dagger was his main weapon.

I'll tell him to start practicing with a longsword starting tomorrow.

The holy sword's conditions were terribly specific, so it wasn't easy to get its approval. The ten missions were even worse.

The difficulty was certainly hard enough.

Next, let's think about taking down the Demon King.

[Warrior? May I continue explaining?]

"No, let me organize my thoughts."

[Yes. I understand, Warrior. Take your time.]

The holy sword is definitely really powerful.

If I take into account the sword's magic spells, I'll become even stronger. If I master those and use them well, I'll be able to exert overwhelming power.

Also, the warrior who holds the holy sword becomes the leader of the five groups of warriors, and plays a pivotal role in defeating the demon king.

Theoretically, the five groups of warriors should number 125. Add to that the Empire's knights.

When we attack the Demon King, they'll probably send soldiers as well.

I tried to estimate the Demon King's strength.

"It sounds like fun."

[I'm sorry? Shall I continue explaining, Warrior?]

"No, I'm really sorry, but I think I'll have to put you back. Since it'd be theft if I just took you. I'll take down the Demon King first and then I'll come back."

I'd finally found a strong opponent, so I didn't want to borrow the sword's strength to take on the Demon King.

I want to test my growing strength.

I'll fight him once and if it doesn't work out, it wouldn't be too late to fight him with the holy sword after.

[What are you...Warrior? Warrior, please don't. Please.]

The holy sword pleaded, but I flipped the holy sword around and stuck it into the ground.

[Warrior, please. You can just keep me with you. Don't put me back into the ground . . . Warrior, wait a moment. Seriously, just wait a minute!]

I put the sword deep into the ground.

[Seriously, give me a minute...You asshole...!]

I pushed the sword all the way down until I couldn't hear the sword's voice anymore.

Its last words sounded like curses directed at me.

Was I imagining it?

## Chapter 153 - Tutorial 26th Floor (4)

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The next morning, I followed Seregia, who came by the lodge to pick me up, and we went to the magic circle located within the castle.

There were several magicians at the location of the magic circle as well as dozens of guards, but when she showed them some sort of identification, they authorized the use of the magic circle without much fuss.

"Please take this, Warrior," Seregia said, giving me a paper bag.

"This is for you to throw up into."

"Throw up into this?"

"Yes. If you use the teleportation magic circle to travel, you'll lose your sense of balance and feel extremely dizzy. At that time, if you feel nauseous, vomit into this."

I didn't think I'd feel dizzy and vomit, but I said that I understood.

In the past, on a trip on a cruise ship, they had given me a plastic bag. It was the same kind of feeling.

It just so happened to have rained that day, accompanied by high waves, so there was the ceaseless sound of vomiting in the auditorium.

My nephew had held onto his plastic bag and vomited like crazy.

Because of the unpleasantly sour smell filling the cruise ship, I had almost gotten motion sickness...

Let's stop it with the nauseating thoughts.

"Please don't be so tense and do not resist against it by drawing from your mana pool."

Seregia's additional request was simultaneously accompanied by

the activation of the magic circle.

The mana started to move, shone, and I was transported.

It wasn't much different from the portal in the stage's waiting room.

It was a little different in terms of comfort, but it was a feeling I had become accustomed to.

The transported location's weather was a bit gloomy.

It was a complete contrast to the clear and bright weather from before.

Also . . .

Retch.

Seregia was vomiting heavily.

She had turned her head, but the vomiting sounds that she was making were so graphic that I could picture them in my head.

I felt a few goosebumps.

After Seregia had calmed down a little and gargled some water in her mouth, she approached me and started talking.

"Hoo, I heard that citrus tea definitely helps with motion sickness."

That was the first time I had heard something like that.

"Those are groundless rumors," I said.

Of course, that's probably the case.

"As a result, I got to see the sparsely dappled white citron flowers mixed in the yellow gastric fluid. It was really unpleasant."

"Why exactly are you explaining that to me?"

"Let's, let's go, Warrior. It's this way."

I followed Seregia's lead.

Beyond the walls, there was a battle going on, so it was noisy; inside of the walls, there were soldiers busily running around while we were going towards the watchtower, but no one restrained Seregia.

"You seem to know the geography of the area quite well."

Seregia hadn't stopped even once, hadn't wavered, and continued walking.

"Yes. That's because when I was on vacation, I would occasionally come here."

"Why would you come here?"

"I came to watch the battle."

She talked about it like she was going to the movie theaters on the weekend.

"Because of that, we were permitted to use the teleportation magic circle without any misgivings. The soldiers probably won't even bat an eye if they see me," Seregia said, laughing amusingly.

I felt that her words were odd.

So she didn't make a formal request to come here.

"Ah, in your case, Warrior, I will just tell them that you're my valet, so they will let you pass easily. Of course, there's no way that someone of the Kunon Knight Order would have a valet, but people don't know much about the Kunon Knight Order."

"Is that so? Rather, don't they know well that the Kunon Knight Order is a peculiar knight order?"

"No. In general, they aren't even aware of its existence. My identification only has a mark stating that I am a knight belonging to the royal family, but there's no mark for the Kunon Knight Order. The Kunon Knight Order is pretty much an invisible man socially."

"I suppose. Depending on the situation that can be an advantage."

She meant that nobody paid attention to them and nobody would touch them. Although they were considered invisible men, for some reason, I felt completely fine with that.

"Yes. As long as we don't make any noticeable mistakes, nobody will care about what we do. Because of that, my wallet is always full."

Yes...how nice.

It was the same when she had talked about her wealth being seized, but Seregia looks like she doesn't have any interest in worldly affairs and seems quite snobbish.

Seregia had led me through the fortress, arriving at the watchtower above the rampart.

Seregia spoke whilst hanging up a 'no trespassing' sign at the entrance of the watchtower.

"This is my secret spot. The watchtower isn't used because it's far too forward and it's within range of enemy magicians. The entrance is also in a corner. It's just the thing for looking around unnoticed."

The watchtower does indeed have a panoramic view of the surrounding area.

The battle was in full swing beyond the walls.

"I didn't know a battle was going on. Should we go and help?"

"It's fine, Warrior. You see our forces over there? Those are all golems."

Taking a closer look, the soldiers on the walls that were fighting the demons weren't humans, but golems.

The golems were around 2 meters tall and had sturdy builds. Although their movements looked a bit slow, they wouldn't stop moving until they were completely destroyed.

Although the Demons' soldiers seemed both wild and ferocious,



the golems weren't pushed back and continued to hold their own.

"Those golems are summoned and managed by magicians. We don't lose much if they're destroyed, so you don't have to worry about it too much."

So, they aren't guarding the fort from atop the wall, but rather, they're summoning and controlling the golems from up there.

"They don't normally get pushed back to the front of the fort. But in the case that that happens, we cannot stay in this watchtower, since it would be dangerous."

Seregia finished explaining and took something out from under the platform in the corner.

They were snacks.

"Would you like some?"

Seregia calmly offered the hidden snacks to me.

I have a hunch that she might've hidden alcohol somewhere too.

"...No, I'll just continue to watch."

After I refused her offer, Seregia calmly started to eat her snacks alone.

What an unusual person.

It might be strange for me of all people to call her that, but Seregia was really strange.

The battle was progressing smoothly.

The golems were on the offensive, but they were being noticeably pushed back. After hearing that it wasn't much of a loss even if they were destroyed, I saw the progress of the battle differently.

At any rate, the humans with mana to spare used it to hold back the enemy.

With that much, I could say that it was an effective harassment.

While the golems put a good fight against the Demons' soldiers, they were being steadily brought down one by one.

"Do they not have any defense against magic?"

"Yes. Since they're golems, even if the enemy magicians only cast Dispel on them, the golems will easily crumble. They're also weak to large-scale magic. However, from the start, magicians can't be too far from the golems, and they'll eventually turn back into a pile of rocks when their time is up. They're just low-rank golems, so I think they're doing plenty enough."

But if you just intercept the magicians, I think you'll have much more significant results.

The Demons' soldiers alone wouldn't be able to take on the golems and they'll be pushed back. Then, they'll naturally have to abandon their position and they might even have to retreat.

I don't know much about the battle, but their retreat would definitely be a favorable outcome.

I organized my thoughts and called the snack-eating Seregia.

"Lady Seregia, could you explain to me where the Demon King is located again, please?"

Seregia took out a map from her bag and started explaining.

"There is a ceremony being performed to summon the Demon King at the top of this mountain. It's west of here, so...it's that mountain over there."

There was a ghastly energy surging into the sky from the mountaintop that Seregia had mentioned.

It would be difficult to notice it immediately since it was so far away, but once I concentrated I could feel that ominous energy.

"This is the fort's current location. And here and here are the strategic points for the Demons. And here, there's an occupied fort. Also, beyond that fort, there are the plains where we've gotten

reports that several new villages have been created. There are at least 20 of them."

Seregia briefly caught her breath and continued her explanation.

"The Demons' reproductive rate is extremely fast. That's why they're capable of doing something crazy like summoning the Demon King. There are probably soldiers that have just been birthed from those new villages stationed around here. We haven't gotten any reports on their exact location, so we don't really know. Also, if you follow this river, there might be few guard posts. We haven't gotten any reports, but I think I heard that they're transporting their supplies down the river."

Seregia explained the important points around the fort and the mountains using the map .

While I only honestly needed to know where the mountaintop where the Demon King was being summoned was, the contents were very detailed so I listened attentively.

Although I felt bad for Seregia, I didn't come here to sight-see.

I think I should just take care of the Demon King while I'm here.

And take care of all the demons that get in my way.

"Lady Seregia."

I stood up and called for Seregia.

"Yes. Do you want some snacks?"

"...No. I'm sorry, but please wait here, Lady Seregia."

"Where are you going?"

"I'm going up to the mountaintop where the Demon King is being summoned."

"That's reckless."

She left the crevice in the watchtower and responded.

"I personally don't think so."

I launched myself out of the watchtower and dropped to the ground.

On the way, I activated my Talaria's Wings and flew towards the battlefield.

Originally, I had planned to use Soul Cry to gather up all the enemies in the surrounding area and killing them before heading to the Demon King.

However, contrary to my expectations, Seregia had, without any prior notice, brought me here.

In this situation, if I used Soul Cry rashly, allies would be caught in it as well.

Invoking the Soul Cry, Soul Siphon, Talaria's Wings, and Indomitable skills had one weakness: they didn't differentiate between friend and foe.

Soul Cry affects who I perceive as my enemy and the person who perceives me as an enemy. If I used it improperly, the commander here might send his troops to attack me.

So, there were two methods available for me to use all my strength.

One was using Seregia to tell the commander about my existence.

This seems like it'd be a real hassle.

He'd start with asking why I'm here and then he'd lecture me about how I'd messed with the schedule and talk about how I can't move arbitrarily or maybe even talk about how I can't just secretly hide in the watchtower.

That plan had more than just one or two problems.

It would waste a lot of time too.

The second method was much simpler.

Just make all the battlefield's commanders and soldiers aware of

me, that I'm on their side.

At the very least, that I'm an enemy of the Demons.

I flew in the air and I verified the Demon Magicians' location.

They still hadn't noticed me flying above them.

When one of the magicians uttered an incantation, I quickly descended and tore through him.

My fingertips had pierced through his chest, killing him, and I leapt back into the air once more.

I found my next target and ambushed him.

This time, while I was flying around, I struck the side of a magician's face.

The magician's head violently twisted, breaking his neck, and killing him.

I flew back into the sky again.

I repeated this a few times and cut down their numbers one by one, so the enemy should notice me soon.

I descended again and aimed for my next target.

Perhaps the enemy commander became aware of me since the magic flew towards me all at once.

However, the magic projectiles weren't really that fast.

There weren't that many of them either.

I easily evaded them one by one and approached my target.

"Flame Strike."

The magician right in front of me cast his magic.

Since we were really close, instead of evading it, I roughly blocked it with my wings. After, I reached my hand out and grabbed his neck.

I once again flew up into the air.

The Demons' soldiers attempted to catch me, their magic constantly flying at me.

I stopped rising up into the air when I got out of the range of their magic.

I broke the neck of the magician I was holding onto and dropped his body to the ground.

This should be enough.

The magicians, which were the ones deciding the battle, were no more.

I killed the enemy's key force, their magicians, the ones deciding the battle.

In just a short time, I had killed 10 enemy magicians.

It's definitely a result that could turn the tides of the battle.

Also, there was the magic that the enemy magicians had fired at me simultaneously to intercept me.

I had definitely caught both sides' soldiers attention.

Above the fortress, the commanders on the human side who were watching over the battlefield must've seen the magicians.

Now, rather than them perhaps seeing me as an enemy, they will no longer be caught up in my skills.

I felt that this too was bothersome but it turned out better than I had expected.

Against the large amount of enemies, I continuously dropped from the sky and attacked like a bird of prey. Picking off their forces from a long-distance was a totally new experience.

However, now it was time for my style.

The ceremonies from yesterday morning to now were just one day but it was difficult to endure.

I descended once more.

This time, I didn't aim for the magician. I simply landed onto the ground.

As I landed, Demon soldiers from all around crowded around me.

"Uah!"

[Soul Cry]

I used Soul Cry and started the fight.

My destination: the mountaintop where the Demon King is being summoned.

My target: everything around the Demon King's location.

# Chapter 154 - Tutorial 26th Floor (5)

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I sat atop a pile of rocks to briefly catch my breath.

I didn't really need to take a break, though.

Due to corpses strewn around and the accompanying blood scattered throughout the surrounding area, the pile of rocks looked like a tiny island in the sea.

While I sat upon the pile of rocks, I gazed at the sky and heard rustling footsteps in the distance.

I saw a shadow cast by the sun's light amongst the trees.

I waited quietly.

There weren't any remaining enemies in my vicinity.

The only ones still alive were Seregia and I.

Seregia avoided the strewn corpses and walked towards the mound of rocks... No, she crawled over to me.

Wheeze.

I can easily discern her condition just by hearing her heavy breathing.

It was obvious when one considered the distance we had travelled today.

"That's why I told you to stay at the fort. Why did you follow me?" I asked.

"Just a minute, I... Pant. My breath. I need a second to catch... my breath... Hoo. I'm a little dizzy."

"Yes. Please catch your breath."

Seregia climbed up the pile of rocks. I briefly waited so that Seregia could catch her breath.

I wonder why she had followed me this far?



That was the question.

It would've been fine if she had just stayed at the fort.

Of course, she could choose to follow me.

She might have followed me due to her sense of responsibility, or even because of her curiosity.

Or perhaps there was an entirely different reason that I'm unaware of.

However, she had to witness countless people die right before her eyes. Someone who disregards all that death and recklessly follows someone isn't normal. At least, it's not something a normal human would do.

Most people would turn back. They would run away.

After Seregia had calmed down a bit, I asked her again.

I asked her why she had followed me.

"I'm regretting it right now."

Of course you are.

Her hair was disheveled and her sweat had caused her clothes and hair to stick, so she seemed quite uncomfortable.

Her lungs wheezed, her breath emitted a stuffy smell, and her legs trembled.

Her clothes and her shoes were stained with blood and her hands and face were dusty.

It would be difficult to traverse that distance even if she had a horse, yet she had just chased after me with her own two legs; it was obvious that she would be tired.

What's worse, she had followed me through the recesses of the dark mountain.

"Hoo. I thought I was going to die. I couldn't get any closer no matter how fast I ran. Plus, the mountain's getting more and more

rugged. And there's the bodies scattered beneath my feet. The smell is disgusting as well. Not to mention, there's the occasional attack from the Demon soldiers."

There was one thing that she said that was bothering me.

"What do you mean by demon attacks? There shouldn't be any demons left."

I had definitely drawn all of the enemies in the area to me and killed them.

And there weren't any remaining enemies on the route I was on.

"Yes. That was a lie," Seregia said confidently, with her peculiar outspokenness.

Once again, I felt like her confidence was absurd.

"Why are you going so far as to lie?"

"I just wanted to try bluffing. Do you have a problem with that?" she said bitterly.

"...No. Well."

Seregia quickly apologized for her bitter response.

"I'm sorry. It's become a habit."

"A habit?"

"Yes. Everyone I meet and talk to just say 'yes, yes' and agree to everything I say. I don't know when it started, but maybe that's why I started to get into the habit of bluffing."

"Ah... I see. Even so, please don't do that."

"Yes. I understand."

Even so, I appreciated that she was honest, even here.

Somehow, I think I've started to understand her situation, especially since it was a type of problem that I had experienced.

In general, differences in status can create a gap in

communication.

She's shunned within the royal family's knight order.

It's likely that most of the people around her ignore her and ostracize her, so the only people she can talk to are people who occupy a lower status than her.

She couldn't even look someone directly in the eye, unlike most knights who belonged to the royal family.

It seems like that's the situation she's in.

She's isolated from other people.

She might not even have family or friends.

In cases like hers, a close friend would be really beneficial to her.

I wanted to ask her if she had a friend, but if she really didn't have any it would end up as an extremely rude question.

"Ah. Then by any chance, was your analysis of my swordsmanship also a bluff?"

"In part. I predicted that you would be to handle a sword, Warrior."

"How?"

"If you want to wield the holy sword, you have to be a swordsman."

Ah... that's right.

In general, the warriors are summoned in groups of twenty-five, but in my case, I was summoned alone.

It was highly likely that a warrior that was summoned alone would have the capabilities of a swordsman, since they needed to be able to wield the holy sword.

"But my statements regarding the 'intervals' of your sword weren't lies."

I knew that.

She had already proven her talent by correctly identifying the 'intervals' of my swordsmanship.

Although she had deduced things in a somewhat backwards manner, even so, it was still enough to say that her innate abilities were amazing.

I relayed my appreciation, and told her not to worry about it.

Also, I told her once again that she was amazing.

Seregia laughed awkwardly.

"Thank you."

When I had complimented her inside of my lodgings, she had laughed with the same awkward expression.

Seregia's face wouldn't change with most work, so I found her current expression to be quite unusual.

"I'm very happy," Seregia added.

She hadn't calmed down yet, so she caught her breath before opening her mouth again.

"I don't know how you'll take this, but you're the strongest person that I've ever seen, Warrior."

"Yes. That sounds about right," I responded, speaking in a way similar to Sergia's.

That's obvious.

There's no way you've seen someone stronger than me.

"Maybe that's why I feel like I'm being rewarded as time passes. I'm talking about when you first complimented me, saying that I was amazing. I was truly happy... and I was really touched."

Seregia's talking for a long time.

It's unlike her.

She's reacting differently from when I had complimented her the other day.

It was easy to understand why.

It's because she had been fiercely exercising continuously for a long time, so she's secreting hormones.

TL Note: He's basically saying that she's not in her right mind, and is being overly specific as to why he thinks this. He's socially inept, remember?

Right now, it must feel as though her brain is slightly tipsy.

I'll say it again, but this isn't very different from a drunken confession.

It wasn't bad.

Since I had also wanted to hear what she had to say.

It seems like Seregia had been much happier than I had thought from that small praise.

That might be why she decided to bring me to the fort without asking any questions.

Maybe that's why she followed me up until now too.

"So is that why you followed me?"

I might've been wrong, but I just wanted to hear her reason for following me.

"At first, I came with you because I thought you might get lost. At the time, I had thought you would fight in the area for about one or two hours. After that, I tried to stop you to tell you that it was dangerous. However, I couldn't catch you with my own two feet."

In any case, she's just saying that she was worried, so she followed me.

Rather, I appreciated her intentions.

"Warrior, I didn't think you would come this far. Are you truly

planning on going all the way up to the summit where the Demon King is being summoned?"

"Yes. That's why I came here."

"Without the holy sword?"

"Yes."

"That's reckless. The holy sword is not a normal sword. Of course, I've seen how amazing you are, Warrior. I've seen you kill plenty of Demons today to know that. However, the power of the holy sword isn't simply at the level of a mere precious sword. Also, if you don't have the power of the holy sword, you cannot repel the Demon King. It's too reckless."

"That's what I'd like to say to you, Lady Seregia. Now, what would you like to do? I'm going to start moving again," I said, standing up from my spot.

"How about we turn back?"

"If I was going to do that, I wouldn't have come this far."

"Go back and at least get the holy sword. Warrior, you should have more than enough qualifications to wield the holy sword."

"I don't want a holy sword that groans in a man's voice."

"I'm sorry?"

I dusted off my pants.

Before I continued, I stretched and warmed up.

"I think I have to set off now."

"...Shouldn't you rest a little more before you go? While you're at it, what about leaving after the morning sun comes up?"

"I've rested enough."

"What about eating some snacks before you go?" she said, taking off the bag from her back and pulling out some snacks.

The snacks were all crushed.

I giggled after seeing her forlorn expression.

"Unfortunately, there aren't any snacks to eat."

"Warrior," Seregia sighed.

"Yes."

"How far are you going to go?"

"As I said, I'm going all the way up to the summit where the Demon King is being summoned."

"No. That's not what I'm saying... Where are you planning to rest tomorrow?"

To be honest, my plan was to just to burst straight to the place where the Demon King is being summoned without any rest.

There's no way I'd lack the stamina to get there and I couldn't even sleep due to my insomnia.

However, Seregia stuck onto me.

[TL Note: The literal translation is as follows: The luggage known as Seregia stuck onto me.]

"Ok... Then, shall we rest at that fort you see over there? Like we're doing right now."

"...It'll take a couple of days to get to that fort."

"Eh, if we go fast, we can get there by tomorrow afternoon."

"The route will be swarming with demons."

"That's exactly what I want."

After saying that, I dashed forward.

It wasn't really running, rather it was more like I was an arrow that was piercing through the air.

I wonder what decision Seregia will make, in that deserted place behind me.

I sensed that Seregia had stood up.

Would she decide to follow me again?

It was a really quick break.

That girl should need to eat and sleep...

Does she really plan to follow me?

The more deeply I advanced into enemy territory, the more demons appeared.

The demons that weren't in range of my skill might ambush Seregia.

There was no need for any calculations; it was certain that she'd face danger on her journey.

I sensed Seregia moving behind me.

"Why are you doing this?"

I put a wet towel over my face and asked Seregia, who was sprawled on the earthen floor.

She really followed me, though she looked like she was dying.

She looked like a marathon runner who had overexerted herself. It seemed like it had been too much for her heart.

Thus, she had arrived at the fort before sunset.

"...Pardon?"

"Why are you risking your life to follow me?"

"...Really, I'd like to say the same to you. Please answer me first."

I had insisted that I had asked her first, but I pondered the subject briefly and changed my mind. I would answer her first.

"It's to defeat the Demon King."

Seregia flinched slightly.

It was unfortunate that I couldn't see her expression because of



the wet towel.

I wonder what kind of expression she has on right now?

"Then my reason is to watch you defeat the Demon King, Warrior."

I had to think about what she said for a second.

And I accepted it.

I couldn't figure out the reason she followed me.

"Is there a reason you want to do that?"

"Assisting you, Warrior, is the first mission I received. If it's possible, I want to complete my mission properly. Also, if by any chance you defeat the Demon King by yourself, shouldn't I at least be there to watch you accomplish that great feat?"

I felt as though her reason was based on her sense of responsibility, but that's only if I ignore that one thing that's missing.

Seregia hadn't even mentioned anything regarding her own safety.

"It's dangerous. You could die."

"Couldn't I say the same to you, Warrior?"

No.

It's not dangerous for me.

I won't even die.

"If that's not the case, then I won't die as well."

I couldn't understand her as always, so I gave up talking to her.

Also, after fifteen minutes, I revised my schedule to depart immediately.

If I maintain this speed, Seregia will die of either exhaustion or a heart attack.

"Please drink this. It's a potion."

"Yes. Thank you."

I took out a health potion from my inventory and gave it to Seregia.

Seregia didn't reject the potion and drank it wholeheartedly.

After she drank the health potion, she stood up, and examined the surrounding area.

"Are you perhaps departing immediately again?"

"No. I'm thinking of staying for a couple of hours before leaving."

"A couple of hours... I should take that as a relief. Warrior. Did you perhaps pack any food? If you don't have any, should I find something to eat in the storehouse?"

Truthfully, food didn't really have much of an effect on my body anymore.

If you don't eat for too long, there'll definitely be some issues. However, when I cleared a past stage and returned to the waiting room, I was fine without eating.

That's why I haven't purchased any food lately.

I thought that there might be something to eat in my inventory, and I looked around.

There was some beef jerky.

I took out the beef jerky and some bottled water, and shared it with Seregia.

"Thank you. This is great because it has its own flavor."

"The beef jerky we're eating inside of a fort filled with bodies?"

"Yes," Seregia said firmly, and roughly tore the beef jerky.

It's hard to tell who's the Warrior when she's like this.

"Ah, Lady Seregia. Would it be rude of me to ask about your life

before you were exiled to the knight order?"

"Not at all. There's not much to talk about."

"Then, can you tell me about it?"

"Yes. Before I joined the knight order, I was an academy instructor. I was a swordsmanship instructor."

"You were an instructor?"

"Yes. The story is kind of long. If I were to shortly sum it up, an academy graduate whose family had been ruined decided to take up a position as an academy instructor rather than go back to her hometown."

I think you've summed it up far too simply.

She acts like it wasn't a big deal, but since she didn't seem to want to talk about it in detail and only told me the simplified version, I decided to move on.

"Then how were you exiled to the knight order?"

"It wasn't exile. Rather, I joined the knight order, Warrior. That too, isn't a big deal. I just entered a swordsmanship competition that was hosted by the royal family using my qualifications as an academy instructor. Thanks to my refined swordsmanship, I won the competition."

"You won the competition, but you were exiled?"

"Yes. There were several reasons. I'm a commoner, my family was ruined, I'm a woman, and I was an instructor, even though I wasn't a knight. There were a few trifling problems. But when I think about them one by one, there are actually quite a lot of them."

I sketched a picture in my head.

As I thought, the conversation didn't have a bright atmosphere.

"You're still amazing. You won the swordsmanship competition

that even knights enter."

Seregia briefly smiled bashfully, but suddenly straightened her face and spoke.

"Of course. I was the best at swordsmanship."

It seemed like she actually did have some pride in her abilities.

She was a swordsmanship instructor, huh... She's exactly the person I need.

"Then how was my swordsmanship?"

"Your swordsmanship, Warrior?"

"Yes. You saw me fight from afar, didn't you? I'm simply curious."

Seregia pondered briefly and responded.

"Honestly, I could only see flashing lights and the death of the swarming enemies from afar. There weren't many traces on the enemies' bodies, either. Ah, but there is something that comes to mind."

"Something that comes to mind?"

"Yes. I'm talking about the bodies that occasionally look burnt. I've seen traces like that in the past. I remember that the previous head of the knight order had shown me a fallen kingdom's swordsmanship known as arcane swordsmanship.

A kingdom's arcane swordsmanship.

That phrase briefly reminded me of a man's face.

"Lady Seregia. Who was the previous head of the knight order?"

"Based on what I've heard, he was forced to enter the knight order because of a mistake he made in the past."

"A past mistake?"

"Yes. It's likely that an illegitimate child showed up."

"Ah, I see...Lady Seregia. Was he by any chance a really talkative person?"

"No. He was a taciturn person who would barely speak one or two words a day."

I guess not.

# Chapter 155 - Tutorial 26th Floor (6)

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"What do you plan on doing now?"

Seregia and I were hiding on the mountainside, watching the summoning process proceed at the top of the mountain.

I had departed from the fort only five days ago and had arrived here six days after entering the stage.

And right before my very eyes, I saw the scene of a demon killing other demons.

"What exactly are they doing over there?"

"It seems to be a living sacrifice for the summoning ceremony."

I didn't know that this Demon King summoning thing involved living sacrifices.

It was entirely reasonable, cause of the Demons having a quick reproduction rate.

But it was pretty uncomfortable to watch.

I had killed around the same amount of demons that they're using as living sacrifices, so it's not something that I of all people should say.

It was ironic.

"I don't believe that it's usually this kind of ceremony. However..."

"However?"

"They may be rushing the ceremony because of you, Warrior."

There is some truth in that.

The condition for clearing the 26th floor stage was to defeat the Demon King.

When you start the stage, the Demon King wouldn't have been

completely summoned yet, so the clear conditions would usually be to defeat the Demon King or to interfere with the summoning ritual.

However, the fact that the clear conditions showed up as defeating the Demon King may mean that no matter when I got here, the Demon King would be summoned without fail.

"However such a haphazard method will certainly have side effects."

"What kind of side effects?"

"For example, the summoned object may be unable to fully cross over, or it may restrict the Demon King. Those kind of side effects."

It may be a modification for someone like me who discarded the holy sword and rushed here as fast as I could.

You didn't have to.

"You seem to know quite a bit."

I hadn't expected Seregia to know about something like a summoning ceremony.

"It's on the level of common sense."

After the brief explanation, Seregia called me again.

"Warrior, I asked you this before. No, I had already asked you this several times on the way here, but what do you plan on doing now?" Seregia asked, sounding slightly annoyed.

I was really surprised about her annoyance.

An ominous mana surged wildly at the site of the living sacrifices.

Furthermore, the Demon King will be summoned here soon.

Yet, Seregia didn't feel fear or dread. Instead, she was concerned about the fact that I was ignoring her.

Does she have a few extra lives or something?

"I wonder. Shall we wait a little? It looks like the ceremony will wrap up soon. Now that it's already like this, let's wait a little longer, and then take down the Demon King."

Seregia responded with rapidly changing expressions.

Her expressions changed constantly from this to that; Seregia looked to be pondering something and after sighing, said, "Fine. Do you as wish."

Rather than say 'ok, I understand', she seemed to have resigned herself.

I took out some beef jerky from my inventory.

"Would you like some?"

"Of course."

Seregia took the beef jerky as if it were the obvious thing to do.

How could she be so calm?

It was strange.

"It is strange," Seregia said, chewing on the beef jerky.

I was shocked for a moment; Seregia's sudden response made it seem like she could hear what I was thinking..

"I can't believe you thought of eating beef jerky in a place like this. The enemy will swarm us if they notice us. Aren't you worried at all?"

You're the one who's eating the beef jerky.

"Honestly, our enemies have already noticed us," I said.

"I'm sorry?"

"A few of them have already noticed that we're hiding here," I said.

Hearing this, Seregia furrowed her eyebrows.



"Should we run away? Or should we prepare for battle?"

"You just need to eat the beef jerky. It seems like they won't move an inch because of the summoning ceremony. As long as we don't provoke them, nothing should happen."

If I fight, it'll definitely cause enough of a disturbance to disrupt the summoning ceremony.

Our enemies knew that fact well.

They also knew that they wouldn't be able to stop me, nor would they be able to catch me.

If I decide to act, enemies from all sides will probably attack me. But if they don't, the battle will end as they watch.

Probably.

I was bored since I was sitting still, just chewing on beef jerky.

It would be nice if I could swing my sword.

For the past few days, Seregia had taught me swordplay.

Seregia had said that she couldn't reveal to me her own style of swordsmanship. However, she said that there wasn't much of a problem if she observed my swordsmanship and gave me tips or pointed out flaws.

Therefore, on the way here, I would demonstrate my style of swordsmanship in order to get some advice.

When she inspected my swordsmanship, she didn't actually teach me but discussed it with me.

She would grasp the intent behind each of my movements, one by one, and told me to figure out how to better accomplish the goal behind the action.

Seregia was definitely the most knowledgeable person on the subject of swordsmanship that I had ever met.

She was especially talented in the theoretical side of things.

Seregia scrutinized and interpreted my sword techniques one by one, as if she were solving a math problem.

She dissected my strokes breath by breath and pondered on whether there was anything I could improve on.

This had been a helpful experience for me, since it had been the first time I had ever analyzed my formless swordsmanship.

That's why I didn't feel like coming here together with her was a waste of my time.

"Lady Seregia."

The words came out before my mind had even processed them, probably because I was bored.

I didn't really have anything to say, so I just started off by calling her.

"Yes, Warrior?"

What should I say?

"What will you do, Lady Seregia, when I defeat the Demon King?"

"I'm curious as to why you ask, Warrior. Are you asking me what I'll do after you defeat the Demon King and I barely survive?"

"No. I'm talking about when you return to the capital."

"I'll disappear or I'll prepare for my exile."

"... I'm sorry?"

"It'd definitely be a great ending if you defeat the Demon King and safely return. They'll probably ignore the minor mistakes I've committed because of it. Even so..."

"Even so?"

"It'll really become troublesome. You're an outsider Warrior, while I'm affiliated with the royal family. When the news spreads that we defeated the Demon King by ourselves, it'll become a great story. Rather than be a spectacle, it'd be better to get the reward

and disappear."

I watched as the expressionless Seregia spoke, but as per usual, I couldn't tell whether she was being serious or if she was joking.

I briefly displayed a vacant expression, but then I felt mana starting to run amok from the top of the mountain.

"Just as you wanted, it seems like the Demon King is being summoned, Warrior. Hm... this is... a little... serious. I had expected it, but..."

Just as Seregia said, it was indeed quite severe.

On the mountaintop, the space above the altar ripped apart, and out came an entity with a seriously nonsensical amount of mana.

Rather than a single entity, it felt like nature itself was moving.

It was like if you compressed a huge mountain of mana into a walking three-meter-tall person.

The Demon King was slightly shorter than three meters.

He had giant bat wings behind his back, and an ominous energy lingered within the glare of his red eyes.

There was one other thing that was peculiar. That guy had already noticed me.

When the summoning ceremony was completed, and the Demon King had fully crossed over to this world, he looked like he would immediately dash over to me.

His fighting spirit and his killing intent plainly revealed his desire.

I stood up.

I transformed one of my Thousand Arms into a long sword and grasped it in my right hand. I transformed my other Thousand Arms into a dagger and strapped it onto my belt.

As I stretched my body, I asked Seregia, "What are my chances

against the Demon King?"

"It looks like you have around a 2% chance."

You're too stingy.

I wanted to fly over to the Demon King, who was yet to be fully summoned, but Seregia spoke from behind me.

"Warrior. If at all possible, please don't die."

If at all possible.

As always, she chose some new words.

"Yes. Please don't move and wait here, Lady Seregia. I'll put on a good show for you."

I could accurately measure my enemy's strength.

Indomitable was a skill that would increase my strength based on how strong my opponent is. With this skill's effect, I could easily tell gauge my opponent's strength.

Right now, my Indomitable skill was enhancing my strength more than ever before.

What's worse, that buff was constantly getting stronger.

I felt an empowering feeling surge within my body, and at the same time, I felt a feeling of satisfaction.

After the Godmother from the 19th floor, this is my strongest foe yet.

After the 20th floor, most of the enemies that appeared fought while relying on their overwhelming numbers.

This was probably because they were stages that required 5 or 10 people parties, rather than solo play.

However, the 26th floor required a party of 25.

They call it party play, but with 25 party members it's more like a raid.

Also, there was an adversary that the group of 25 challengers had to defeat in order to clear the stage. That single entity was right in front of me.

There was no way I wouldn't be excited.

I activated my Talaria's Wings and soared into the sky, watching the Demon King's summoning.

I smirked.

As soon as the Demon King's summoning was complete, and he had fully crossed over to this world, he roared at the sky.

[.....!!]

I didn't hear it.

A loud noise had definitely rung in my ears, but I couldn't hear the exact sound.

That's strange.

Next, the Demon King, who had screamed into the sky, watched me.

Then, he yelled again.

[.....!]

Simultaneously, the Demon King discharged a black energy at me.

Is it a type of magic attack?

I enveloped my long sword in mana and hurled it forward.

It instantly flew onward.

The Demon King's magic and my mana clashed right before my eyes and exploded.

I used the flight ability of Talaria's Wings and fluttered the wings.

Talara's Wing's doesn't "fly" by physically fluttering the wings.

They just work.

Although there had been an explosion, I ignored it and maintained my speed, flying forward.

Due to the explosion, I was hit by a sizable wave of fire, and was shaken because of the swirling mana.

As soon as I made it out of the explosion radius, I used my magic.

"Wind Arrow."

When compared to the Demon King's magic, it was a weak, trifling magic.

The Demon King didn't even need to evade it and raised his hand, negligently defending against it.

The Wind Arrow was deflected with the back of his hand and was helplessly destroyed.

That was all it needed to do.

I targeted the Demon King's chest right under his raised arm.

[Blink]

I had continuously used this skill in the past, and I had never found its strength lacking: Blink Slash.

I slashed downwards with the added speed of my blink, and the Demon King's body spurted blood.

However, that was it.

I had precisely cut through the left side of his chest, but my attack had ended with only a little bit of blood flowing from his sturdy body.

I had already attacked, so now it was the Demon King's turn.

The Demon King's eyes shined red.

I urgently turned, and escaped to the periphery of the Demon King's sight.

The Demon King immediately shot a beam where I had been standing.

After I dodged the beam, I had closed the distance in order to counterattack, but the Demon King's attack wasn't finished.

I had narrowly dodged the Demon King's fist that was enveloped with black energy.

As soon as I dodged his fist, magic flew at me.

If I dodged his magic, he would attack with his arms or his legs next.

Without any warning, he would either shoot beams out of his eyes or use his magic, so it was extremely difficult to take back the initiative to attack.

The Demon King just kept on attacking me continuously.

He definitely had greater mana and stamina than me, and I would lose the fight if it kept going on like this.

I dodged the unexpected spear-like objects that shot out from behind me.

Behind the Demon King's back, a tail unexpectedly shot out like a spear. I dodged the Demon King's tail attack and the Demon King used magic again.

A black magic flew right toward my face.

If I dodge this, I give up my opportunity to attack to the Demon King.

I transformed the Thousand Arms in my right hand and altered my long sword into an explosion sword.

[PR Note: This explosion sword thing is more like a flaming sword that causes explosions when the blade comes into contact with the enemy/other blades. It is further explained later in the text.

And rather than unreasonably trying to dodge the magic, I quickly shielded myself with Talaria's Wings and let the magic collide.

Before I could even see the strength of his magic, I blinked from my position.

I prevented myself from flying backwards from the magic by using Blink's effect to erase the kinetic energy.

The force of the magic would've certainly crushed my body.

However, in exchange, I took advantage of the opening between the Demon King's attacks.

I pierced the Demon King's chest with the explosion sword that I had transformed the Thousands Arms into.

It was like I was cutting through metal rather than flesh; the sword couldn't pierce deeply into the Demon King's chest.

It could pierce a depth as deep as the length of a single finger.

However, that much was enough.

I had figured out more of the Thousand Arms transformations through Park Jung Ah's help. One of them was the explosion sword.

The explosion sword, as the name might imply, explodes.

The blade of the explosion sword lodged in the Demon King's chest, exploded.

The force of the explosion sword's explosion wasn't that great.

The fire probably wouldn't do any damage to the Demon King's heart.

However, the only thing that I had wanted from the explosion sword was to deepen the already-open wound in the Demon King's chest.

And the explosion sword had delivered on my expectations.



Next, the Demon King's attack flew towards me.

His right hand, enclosed with a blackish-red energy, flew towards me.

His forearm, and even his nails were covered in that heinous energy.

I can't evade this.

I had stabbed the Demon King with my explosion sword and detonated the blade, but I had used up more time than the gap allocated.

I went for that unreasonable attack even though it hadn't been my turn to attack. Rather, it had been the Demon King's turn.

From the start, the time that I had to attack was too short.

Along with that, I had sustained a lot of injuries from his magic attacks in order to create that opportunity.

I have to make a decision.

Right now, the Demon King's attacks are flying towards me by the moment.

From the start, it was an unfavorable fight.

The difference is huge in our fundamental stats.

Even though I had attacked the Demon King in the same spot several times, he wasn't really damaged much.

But the single attack that I had endured was a severe wound.

There's also a difference between the range of our attacks.

I had to continuously close in on him in order to attack, even if it was risky.

However, there was something even more fatal than that: the order of our attacks. The Demon King could attack whenever.

If the Demon King started to attack, he wouldn't give me an

opportunity to counterattack.

Through his magic, his beam, his wings, his tail, or other methods of attack that he hasn't shown yet, he dictates the flow of battle by ceaselessly attacking me.

However, when I attack, he would have several opportunities to counterattack.

I have to make a decision.

Amongst the things that I had gained from discussing swordsmanship with Seregia, the most valuable had definitely been this.

A new idea.

Seregia's swordsmanship was based on theory.

It was delicate and systematic, but it also had its fair share of weaknesses.

Amongst those, there was a fatal weakness.

Since it focused so much on theory, it would underperform in a real fight.

For example, sacrificing an arm in order to secure temporary dominance or in order to secure an advantageous space or position.

It's a method that someone would come up with from a desk.

It sounded like crap, but Seregia had insisted that this could theoretically work.

[TL and PR Note: The next part is kind of like a list. There wasn't really a good way to rephrase these in complete sentences without heavily adjusting the style, so there are only minor edits in the following section.]

Even if you give up an arm, if you maintain your mobility, and occupy a superior position.

And you can perfectly ignore the enemy's attack and the pain.  
And if you have the mental capacity to continue the battle.

And if you have the ability to judge when it's right to give up an arm for the sake of getting an upper hand in the battle.

Lastly, if you have the skills to apply all this so that the chance that you've painstakingly made doesn't go to waste.

I made my decision.

Scarlet blood spurted out and my right shoulder flew up into the air.

In exchange, I got another chance to attack.

## Chapter 156 - Tutorial 26th Floor (7)

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By sacrificing an arm, I created an opportunity to attack.

If I don't take advantage of this opportunity, it'll spell my defeat.

My life rests on this single strike.

I have to land the finishing blow with that attack.

I have to pierce through the Demon King's maelstrom of mana, as well as his sturdy body.

However, I'm confident.

I'm confident that I can pierce through the Demon King's defense.

I drew the dagger that was strapped onto my belt.

I was more familiar with a shorter weapon than a longsword-styled weapon, even more so when considering that my left hand was relatively clumsy compared to my right hand.

I raised my left hand that grasped the dagger and the dagger flew towards the Demon King's left chest, the area of his injury.

The dagger instantly pierced through the Demon King's protective barrier and the blade continued to fly, unperturbed by any obstacles.

On the 16th floor, the knight had taught me a key factor to his swordsmanship that led to a killing blow: the finishing blow wasn't a technique that required the sword or the feet to move.

Instead, you would manipulate your mana to manifest an explosive aura.

That was the finishing move of his swordsmanship.

Immediately after I had lost my right arm, I took an ambiguous stance.

There was only a moment of time to attack.

Everything was unfavorable for me, but I succeeded.

The blade of my dagger which was filled with my blazing aura, precisely lodged itself into the prior wound on the Demon King's left chest.

It only went as deep as finger.

However, that was enough.

It had been an injury that I had dug deeper into, bit by bit; it had all been for this one opportunity.

The dagger definitely pierced the Demon King's heart.

After I confirmed the sensation that I felt in my hand, I used my skill.

[Blink]

I used my blink to move backwards and widen the distance.

I saw the Demon King's beam as well as an attack from his tail pass by the space I had previously occupied.

Along with my dagger that had lodged into the Demon King's left chest, the standing Demon King's appearance was...

The Demon King's chest was on fire.

I don't know how much resistance to the fire attribute the Demon King has, but the injury was definitely fatal.

Since the dagger, the source of those flames, should have pierced all the way to the central part of the Demon King's heart.

[.....!!]

I heard the Demon King's inaudible scream and confirmed once more.

I won.

I lifted my right arm that had dropped onto the ground.

I roughly put it to my shoulder.

I swallowed down the elixir that I had held in my mouth.

I wonder how long it will take before it all reattaches.

It shouldn't take longer than a minute.

I looked at the enemies in the surroundings that had been watching the fight between myself and the Demon King.

Seregia was still hiding in the same place.

Conversely, the demons were descending the mountain.

I was pondering whether I should chase the monsters that were scared out of their wits.

I decided not to.

I turned my head and looked at the Demon King.

The Demon King was dying whilst standing.

The dagger was still lodged inside his left chest and from there, the flames were burning the Demon King's body and slowly spreading.

Despite that, the Demon King didn't look like he was stricken with grief.

Is he thinking that he'll just be unsummoned?

Since he'd received plenty of living sacrifices already, he had a peaceful attitude.

[...]

The Demon King suddenly opened his mouth and said something.

I didn't hear anything in my ears this time either.

However, the Demon King continued to move its mouth.

"Human."

The Demon King said.

"What?"

I responded flatly.

"Why are you feeling malice right now?"

"Did you say malice?"

"I can feel a human's emotions. Since the energy from their emotions is great raw energy. However, I can feel dark emotions right now."

Is that so.

That may be the case.

"It was right after you defeated this body, and achieved a heroic deed. To feel malice at that very moment, I'm surprised. Human. Shall I tell you the reason? The reason that you're frustrated?"

Frustration you say.

I don't think it's to the point of frustration.

"It's definitely towards the human bastards with their unique and dirty competition for positions. They will praise you but also be envious of you. They will create and cover the streets with false stories in order to defame you. It'll probably be accompanied by threats as well. With your strength, you'll be free, but what about the people around you?"

The Demon King was talking excitingly.

This bastard doesn't just fight with martial arts; he's the type of demon that deceives others through words, a type common in fairy tale books.

"Hoh. You seem to be feeling a bit better. It's really just as I say. Human. Hehehehe."

"It's not, though."

Of course, I did feel disappointed.

"It's not, you say? If that's the case, then why are you feeling so

down? Go ahead and speak. Speak out that reason and deny my words, Human."

"Compared to my expectations, this was kind of boring."

"...What?"

"I'm saying you were too weak. You were spoon-fed so many live sacrifices. Don't you feel sorry for all the demons who sacrificed themselves for you?"

After I finished speaking, I rotated my right shoulder.

It's fully attached.

As expected of a high-rank elixir.

It was expensive, so it's effects were top-notch.

I picked up the Thousand Arms in the form of a longsword from the ground.

My shoulder's fully attached, so let's finish this and go.

"Human."

"What?"

"Human!"

"Ah, what is it?"

"You mere dirty and vulgar human! You dare look down upon me!"

Oh, he's mad, he's really mad.

Is he starting to reveal his hot-bloodedness?

Is this the part where the villain provokes the protagonist despicably and the furious protagonist awakens?

Keep it up.

"You were lucky to escape with your life, you fly! You don't even know your place!"



His monologue is long.

Normally, this is the part where the protagonist awakens in one go.

While the Demon King continues to talk on and on.

From the villain's perspective, a sense of crisis would be felt, which might make them wish to immediately kill the protagonist.

I briefly ignored the Demon King's chatter.

I scratched the back of my neck with the blade of my longsword and waited; the Demon King suddenly put up a serious expression, and spoke in calm voice.

"Human."

"What?"

"Run away."

"What?"

"Run away and live! I'll give you a day! Within that time, try to run as far away from me as you can! I'll chase you and burn everything on this continent; I'll definitely catch you and show you hell right before your very eyes!"

When he was done talking, the Demon King lifted his head towards the sky and yelled loudly.

"I, as Sacrifice [.....], [...], offer up all of my kin under my control to the God of Harvest in exchange for bringing out my full power here!"

The Demon King announced to the sky and suddenly the Demon King's body was engulfed in black smoke.

And I started to feel a tremendous concentration of mana from the smoke.

The Demon King had a tremendous amount of mana before, but right now, the amount of mana I felt from inside the smoke was

almost incomparable.

This is the start of the 2nd phase.

My fingers quivered with anticipation for the second time.

My heart throbbed and my body became hot.

"Wind Arrow."

I tried launching my magic at the black smoke, but the wind arrow just pierced through the smoke.

Is it an attack nullifier?

It seemed like it had a similar effect to Idy's skill.

I briefly closed my eyes and I focused on sensing the mana.

My body trembled just from feeling the mana inside that smoke.

Motionlessly, I felt it.

They're completing one bowl.

[TL Note: It's a Korean expression meaning that they're combining to create one thing.]

It's not simply drawing up mana.

Something's being consolidated.

I had to guess the time when that thing would be finished.

The Demon King said he would give me a day.

However, based on the mana I feel, it seemed like it would only take a few minutes until the Demon King's completely regained his strength rather than one day.

I opened my eyes and opened my inventory.

I started to drink all of the strengthening medicine I had.

I didn't need to drink them until now and whenever Kiri Kiri had recommended that I get them, I would buy and collect them one by one; and now, I'm drinking the ability strengthening medicine.

Next, I brought my longsword forward and concentrated.

[Designate Opponent]

It was the skill that the God of Dueling had gifted to me in his offer to become his disciple.

The effect would be that it would designate my foe.

Also, when I confront that foe, it would sharpen my combat abilities and my concentration.

The enhancement would fluctuate based on how strong my opponent was, as well as how threatening the enemy is to me.

Enemy targeting will change according to how I define the concept of an 'enemy'.

Therefore, it was a skill I hadn't been able to use until now.

That's because I hadn't met someone that I truly considered an enemy until now.

I used both Indomitable and Designate Opponent simultaneously because their effects stacked.

I started to feel strength surge into my body.

The excessive mana oozed from my body and shook my surroundings.

I felt like I could destroy everything with just a shake of my hand.

Once I got control over it, it wasn't easy to sit still and wait with all of this power ready.

Kiri Kiri had explained Designate Opponent like this.

It was a really useful skill for me.

Also, amongst its abilities, she said the most useful one was the fact that it would increase my concentration on the enemy.

I didn't understand it back then, but after using it, I think I understand it now.

I was fully concentrating into that black smoke.

My growth, the stage, clearing, or even other people or the gods instantly became irrelevant.

It would erase all those distracting thoughts and I would focus entirely and solely on the Demon King.

With my mind entirely focused on the Demon King, I waited for him to finish.

I also used my other skills, which not only included Talaria's Wings, which would complement my combat abilities, but also Soul Siphon and all the other skills that I could currently use.

[Time Confinement]

After a small amount of time passed, I used Time Confinement.

I confirmed it within the world that seemed frozen.

Just as I had predicted, the moment the duration of Time Confinement is over, the Demon King's transformation will be complete.

If that's the case, what I need to do is simple.

I need to match that timing and prepare my best attack.

The knight on the 16th floor had revealed several possibilities for me.

Originally, the knight had tried to tell me about the fundamentals of the swordsmanship, to a really high degree at that.

However, from what I listened to, his stories were the most valuable.

They told of his swordsmanship and the tales of the knight's past.

The connecting link between his tales that were like a children's story and the swordsmanship that the knight self-taught himself.

That was what was most valuable.

The knight's swordsmanship was defensive.

You would move less than your opponent and use less mana than them.

As you continued, you would aim at the opponent's blind spot and manifest your aura, turning things around and attaining victory at the last moment possible.

This straightforward strategy was studied and developed for centuries by the swordsmen of that world.

Also, the great swordsmen who left their names in history each possessed unique skills.

Everyone could share the defensive method of fighting, but each person's manifestation of aura would appear differently.

The techniques that manifested aura all had grandiose names.

They were filled with jargon and old names that couldn't be interpreted even with the knowledge of the time before Babel.

If you literally translate them, they generally have this kind of meaning: Sun fall. Flame that starts from the ground and touches the sky. Lava rain that covers the sky. The flames of hell that won't extinguish for 7 days and nights.

Just by listening to them, you could tell how cringy the names were.

Also, the knight told me about those cringy techniques.

The knight himself didn't know how to use those techniques but he told me about their forms, their features, and their destructive power.

He also told me what the knights who created these techniques were like.

Using his stories as a foundation, I tried to recreate those techniques one by one.

And I had discovered a common point amongst all these techniques.

This simple swordsmanship that those great swordsmen had made, the thing that they had studied for centuries was the very thing that they couldn't complete.

The feat that the person who first invented the swordsmanship had performed was a sword that when swung once saved the empire and when swung a second time, saved the world, based on what the talkative knight said.

In his later years, when he swung his sword for the third time, a mere human was able to move a god and became a disciple to that god. The sword of that legendary swordsman.

The records had become too unreliable so no one earnestly believed in them and only the great swordsmen who had reached the stage of swordmaster obsessed over that delusion of that sword.

At the end of my long concentration, I felt my Time Confinement being undone.

Perfect timing. To add to that, I'm in perfect condition.

At this moment, I'm in the perfect position.

As soon as the Time Confinement was released, I stepped one step forward and pulled my sword back.

At the next moment, I stabbed with my sword with the entirety of my strength.

I thought it was difficult for even I, who had swung the sword, to cope with the strength that had been thrust forward.

No great swordsman could've even imitated it and ultimately, I succeeded in perfectly recreating that lost swordsmanship.

Light Sword, Type 1. Pierce.

Following the sword's straightforward movement, the world was

illuminated.

The sudden thunderous sound burst forth, making my ears ring briefly before silence enveloped me.

I could barely narrow my eyes from the light piercing them, but I endured it.

With this much light, even if you close your eyelids, you'd go blind.

Rather than close my eyes, I kept my eyes open until the end, and watched as my attack struck.

It plowed through the black smoke and the blade was aimed straight at the Demon King; the blade stretched forth and towards the end, my sight which was completely focused on the blade went white.

My hearing, my sight, and my sense of touch were paralyzed, and thanks to that, I couldn't even witness the aftermath of my attack.

In my surroundings, the mana that I had discharged was still jolting around, so I couldn't even use a sensing skill to check anything.

I pushed down my curiosity regarding the state of the Demon King and myself and fainted peacefully.

[The God of Light is moved by you.]

[All the Gods of the White Holy Temple are watching you.]

# Chapter 157 - Tutorial 26th Floor (8)

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[The God of Light is really moved by you.]

[The God of Light seems to be favoring you.]

[The God of the Sky acknowledges you.]

[The God of Harvest is flustered.]

I regained consciousness.

I don't know when I regained consciousness.

This is a problem that happens when your senses become dulled.

Everything was hazy, as if I was submerged in water.

First, I need to check if my senses have remained intact.

I rubbed my fingertips together.

My senses weren't all dead.

Plus, I could move my hands and arms.

Only the left side, however.

'Inventory.'

I had always had a high opinion of it; the inventory is definitely a great function.

It was comparable to a god's skill.

Because of its accessibility, even though my sight and my hearing were destroyed, I could pull out what I wanted.

I roughly popped off the top of the elixir bottle.

And I poured it about where I believed my mouth would be.

If my neck hasn't been twisted in a strange way, it should've gone down properly.

I poured down the entire bottle that way and waited.

I could feel all the senses in my body returning to normal.



Fortunately, the elixir had properly gone into my mouth.

About half of the elixir had spilled from the corners of my mouth, though.

I took out another elixir from my inventory and drank it.

This time, I drank it without spilling a single drop.

My ears, which hadn't been able to hear anything until now, started to pick up a ringing sound.

Beyond the ringing that sounded as if glass was being scratched, there followed a humming sound of something great.

My eyes, which had been blinded by the strong light, were also restored.

Beyond my closed eyelids, I saw a red light.

As I waited a little longer, I became fully aware of the state of my body.

I tried moving my arms and legs, and I probed every nook and cranny of my joints and muscles.

After I was certain that I was okay, now I opened my eyes.

I felt a slight pain in my eyes.

There wasn't anything that I saw with my hazy eyes that would give me a clue to my circumstances.

I waited a little longer for my vision to clarify.

My surroundings were burning.

The flames lingered on the barren ground and blazed on.

I felt a strong heat coming from the ground.

Flames also lingered on my body and armor as well.

I roughly stubbed the fire out.

The Demon King's summoning altar had disappeared without a trace.

The entire surrounding mountain area had transformed into a flat plateau.

Also, the landscape's changes only reached as far as his attack traveled.

It looked as if the landscape had been artificially erased over by an eraser.

The Light Sword had been so powerful that the aftermath managed to decimate the previous topography.

I had done it. There was a renewed sense of amazement.

I felt proud of my accomplishment.

The Demon King was definitely dead.

There were two reasons for that:

First, my attack had destroyed this entire area and the Demon King had been defenselessly exposed, so I don't think he would've been able to withstand my attack.

I had definitely sensed a tremendous amount of strength coming from the Demon King, but he wasn't so strong that he would be able to survive the aftermath of the Light Sword.

The next reason was a little more clear-cut.

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

[Level Up]

I received five levels at the same time.

Recently, it has been difficult to level up even once in a single round.

It was an amount of experience points that I wouldn't have been

able to attain if I hadn't defeated the Demon King.

Ah, now that I think about it.

I should be over level 51 now.

I opened my status window and checked.

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv. 52

I had definitely surpassed level 51.

However, there was no visible growth in my stats or my skills.

It meant that I won't be rewarded for my level ups, even though I had surpassed level 51.

As things are I won't be able to receive level up rewards until at least level 101.

Looking at my current growth rate, it was highly likely that I wouldn't be able to get rewards even after level 101.

As Kiri Kiri said, it would be for the best to forget about level up rewards now.

After I finished checking my status, I analyzed my circumstances.

The Demon King was dead.

His ominous mana was drifting into the air, but it was just a vestige of the skill he had used.

The demons were... it seems like there was some sort of accident.

I don't know for sure, but as they urgently stampeded down the mountain slope, it seems that the group had tumbled down.

The aftermath of my technique might've created a landslide.

Lastly, I looked at Seregia.

She was dying.

That was surprising.

My back was facing her.

Also, I had aimed my technique in front of me and it thundered straight forward.

She, who had been in the rear, wasn't at a distance where she should be so seriously wounded.

I approached the girl that was collapsed on the ground.

I got close.

The woods that she had hid in had been so thoroughly incinerated that I hadn't noticed immediately.

She was at a much closer place than her original hiding place.

At last, I understood why she was hurt.

Before I had used my technique, that girl had been approaching me.

Since she had closed the distance by that much, she had become incredibly vulnerable to my technique.

She had moved hastily, so she couldn't even protect her body.

It was that kind of reason.

Seregia's whole body was speckled with burns.

The flames had even permeated through her body.

Because of that, the mana inside of her body was also a mess.

Her breathing was erratic and a part of her limbs twitched spasmodically. The other part was like a corpse or a block of wood; it didn't seem like there was any life in it.

To repeat, it was right before she would die.

I took out another elixir bottle from my inventory and poured it down her lips.

I'm using a lot of elixirs today, though I still have a lot left over.

While I waited for her to wake up, I took out a burn ointment and

applied it to her face.

I didn't save any and used the entire container.

It was medicine that I wouldn't use any more and scars might form on her face from this experience; I wanted to prevent that.

As I finished the treatment, I felt pressed by hunger.

I took out beef jerky from my inventory and chewed on it.

It has been a really long time since I'd eaten something due to hunger.

I definitely couldn't use the 'Light Sword' technique freely yet.

I have the skill to use it, but I didn't have the strength to handle it.

It was the same for the Demon King who possessed a tremendous amount of strength, but it was a strong technique that had destroyed the mountain and the altar in an instant.

It had destroyed the mountain and the altar, as well as the Demon King who wielded tremendous strength just like that. It may have been a strong technique, but I'm also at its mercy as well.

If I didn't have a stupidly sturdy body and strong willpower, as well as a tolerance to fire, I wouldn't be able to call it a Light Sword attack; rather, it would be a suicidal attack.

Compared to the Demon King's strength, if it weren't for the likes of the skills Designate Opponent, Indomitable, and Talaria's Wings boosting my strength, I wouldn't have been able to endure it.

Rather than enduring the technique, I might've not even been able to successfully pull it off.

[The God of Dueling is proud.]

[The God of Adventure is happy.]

[The God of Slowness is disappointed.]

Ah, the skill that the God of Slowness gifted me, Time

Confinement, also played a huge role in this fight.

[The God of Slowness snorted.]

She's sulking.

The God of Slowness also sulks more than I had expected.

If there was something that differentiated her from the God of Adventure, it would be that the God of Adventure lets things go easily while the God of Slowness holds on to her feelings for awhile.

Is it because she's the God of Slowness?

In any case, I set aside my thoughts on the timid gods and continued to ruminate about my Light Sword technique.

The first time I had attempted the Light Sword was in the 24th floor waiting room.

At the time, I had failed at performing the Light Sword and my right arm, as well as my abdomen had ruptured violently.

If I hadn't been inside the waiting room, I may have just died right there.

This time too, it had been plenty dangerous.

When I had used the technique, I had an abundance of confidence and my mind had become feverish, so I had used it without any hesitation. However, when I think back on it, it had been an excessively dangerous course of action.

Let's reflect on it.

No matter how loosely in regards to how I hold my life, I can't afford to die.

That would also mean my defeat.

It seems that I had been overly excited from the Demon King's strength.

During that time, I moved at full speed beating down all I could

that I encountered.

However, he was the first enemy that even if I gave everything I had, I didn't know if I could win.

Before I had used the Light Sword, the strength that I had sensed from the Demon King had been double that of the Great Mother that I met on the 19th floor.

[TL and PR Note: M (the previous translator) translated it as the “Great Mother” but it’s not the way I would interpret it. I would translate it as “godmother” and have confirmed it with other translators as well. It would make even more sense considering that it’s the literal translation of the word and she was also something like a deity. Pyrenose thinks its more towards English sensibilities, but we’re just going to go with the previous translation to avoid confusion.]

That's why I had been excited.

On the contrary, right now, I was more calm than usual.

It's as if... it was a wise man's time.

[PR Note: A “wise man’s time” is a Japanese and Korean saying referring to the period after an orgasm when a man is free from sexual desire and is able to think clearly. Sort of like having an epiphany after sex.

Source: ]

After a giant feeling of satisfaction, I felt a sense of calmness, mixed with a little bit of shame and regret.

I still have a long way to go.

Thinking that way, I felt a little bitter.

She looked completely recovered now, so I checked Seregia once again.

She's breathing evenly now.

Her pulse is also normal.

No abnormalities in her brain.

Her mana is circulating normally.

She seems to have just fallen asleep though.

I just sighed before lifting Seregia and carrying her on my back.

And I descended the now-deserted mountain.

I returned slowly on purpose.

There wasn't really any reason to rush back.

I had already defeated the Demon King and it would be over once I return to the castle and acquire the holy sword.

There was still a lot of time left before the 33 days that Kiri Kiri had bet were up.

Also, if you were to ask if I really had a reason to return slowly, I did.

The Light Sword that I had used to defeat the Demon King.

It hadn't been very long since I'd successfully used that Light Sword, so I wanted to make it completely my own.

I couldn't withstand the technique yet, but I wanted to be able to freely use the technique.

I would continue to maintain my senses after using the Light Sword, and I would repeatedly recollect that memory to improve upon myself in order to use it a little more easily as well as more efficiently.

Occasionally, after I ate, I would sit down on the road and I would repeatedly meditate for a few hours at a time.

Since I had Time Confinement, if I gave up just five minutes I could calmly meditate for several hours.

Three days passed that way before Seregia woke up.



At that time, I was sitting in the middle of a field, eating beef jerky and chocolate.

In general, I don't eat this often, but since I had consumed so much stamina in the battle the other day, I had to ingest food periodically.

Because the stamina potions didn't properly treat my fatigue, I would stop walking once every few hours and eat and rest.

What's worse, I was still exhausted even after leveling up.

I might have ended up using that life force or whatever they call it in wuxia novels.

It felt something like that.

I decided to ask Kiri Kiri about it later.

While I had those thoughts, the laid down Seregia regained consciousness.

I told Seregia, who had regained consciousness, what had happened until now.

I had defeated the Demon King, descended the mountain, and was on my way back to the Empire's fort.

Seregia, who had listened to my explanation, abruptly kneeled down.

"Please take me as your disciple," Seregia expressionlessly requested with her peculiar confidence.

And I obviously rejected her.

"I don't want to."

"Why?"

"That's my line. Why?"

"I saw that sword, so it's obvious. I want to see that sword, even if it's just once more in my lifetime."

"...So you can be caught in it again and almost die?"

"Once. No, if I can see it twice more, it's alright if I die."

Seregia spoke so confidently, as if it were obvious that she'd be alright with dying and I was getting a little tired of it.

The world is vast and crazy... well in any case, that's what she said.

"Rather than that, why did you not stay put in your place and approach so closely? Lady Seregia, do you know you were really close to death?"

"At the start, I noticed that the Demon King's strength was unusual, so I was going to take you with me and run, Warrior. It looked like you were going to continue fighting, so I tried to stop you."

"...Is that so? What about what happened next?"

"I judged that there was no reason to stop you when I saw the power that you had gathered in your sword. Instead, I stealthily got closer in order to see it from up close."

"And because of that, you almost died."

"As a result, I saw that sword up close and I also survived, so it paid off."

A payoff. What are you talking about?

If I think about the cost of the consumed elixir, it's definitely a loss.

I sighed and raised my head.

Seregia, who was by my side, peeked her head forward.

"Warrior, your reaction seems a bit strange."

"What about it?"

"Were you perhaps moved?"

"I'm sorry?"

"Were you moved by my words that I was worried about you so I had tried to go to you, Warrior?"

No.

That's definitely not it.

I'm at the point where all of my feelings of empathy are dissolving.

"If you by any chance, were moved by that, please take me as your disciple."

"I really don't want to."

"Why? I don't want much, Warrior. You just need to give me a chance to see your sword within your vicinity, Warrior. In exchange, I'll do anything I can for you."

I had nothing to say in response to Seregia's shameless reason.

What do you mean by 'why'?

You obviously can't.

Since she can't leave this stage.

"I'm good at doing the laundry and cleaning, Warrior."

"What about cooking?"

"...If I try my best, won't I get better someday?"

It seems like she can't cook.

I stood up.

"It seems that your body's well again, so let's slowly depart. Lady Seregia."

"Is it truly impossible?"

"Yes."

"May I ask the reason why?"

"I'll leave this place shortly and it wouldn't be possible to bring you with me at that time, Lady Seregia."

I moved my legs and started to walk.

Soon, the sun went down and the stars glittered in the black sky.

Those countless worlds that are spread out through the cosmos.

The Tutorial System that uses the vestiges of those worlds as a stage.

My feelings were strange.

I knew there were new worlds beyond the cosmos and that those worlds are roaming around out there, so whenever I see the night sky on Earth, I would have a completely different feeling.

"Lady Seregia, so long as you don't die, it's impossible."

I muttered something unnecessarily and advanced forward.

## Chapter 158 - Tutorial 26th Floor (9)

---

"Then rather than warriors, they're more like mercenaries."

"Yes. That's true. They're closer to mercenaries, who move between dimensions, and some among them hide behind the righteous mask of the Warrior group."

TL Note: The Warrior group is comprised of mercenaries that the Empire just calls 'Warriors'.

So that's how it was.

I had thought that the Empire thoughtlessly giving them tasks for this and that was abnormal after summoning them. Instead, in exchange for their summons, the Empire would promise to pay the mercenaries upon the request's completion.

I can understand why they were so flustered when I was summoned by myself.

Since the 'ordered' item had been incorrectly sent.

"Then why does the empire cover them up under the position of a Warrior? Can't they just work as mercenaries?"

It seemed that Seregia herself didn't really understand and scratched her head.

"I also don't understand, but it probably has something to do with honor or fame. Wouldn't the royal family which makes the request, just do it to look admirable? These kinds of stories remain as legends or tales and are passed down to the future generations. If they complete their task well, they'll be given plenty of hospitable treatment and they'll be given a heavy responsibility by the Empire or they'll get the support of the subjects in the capital that may even involve a parade. If you're the type of person that likes that sort of thing..."

I thought it was likely that they'd do something like that, but I

couldn't relate to it.

If you wanted to do that, you should be a celebrity instead.

Ah, would celebrities in this world not be given preferential treatment?

I conversed with Seregia about this and that along our way back to the fort that we used the portal to travel to.

It was valuable time where I could learn about this world's sensibilities and knowledge.

I also learned a lot more regarding swordsmanship.

Seregia voluntarily revealed the movements she used as well as her stances in theory and explained them to me, maybe because it would just be more comfortable or maybe because it would be better.

She explained why they were efficient, what were their pros and cons, and also in what situations you could apply them to.

It wasn't the way I trained my swordsmanship but this was also of great help to me.

From the start, I was also confident in studying theory.

Except, I just never had the opportunity to study combat theory before.

Seregia even explained the contents of what she taught to the academy students.

Since she had been a teacher in the past, I could learn some points even from the most basic content.

"Here you move swing your sword diagonally and take a step back. Then, you just need to swing your sword, stopping it right beside their waist. The reason for this movement is..."

[TL Note: To visualize, she's explaining a technique where you slash with your sword. You actually take a step back with her style;

normally, you'd take a step forward, putting your weight on the front leg.]

"Then, the opponent will push into you, aiming for that gap after a large movement, so they'll rob you of the time spent on the diagonal sword swing. But in the next moment, you'd respond with a stabbing attack or you would take another step back."

"Yes. You're right. The movements are just as you see and it looks like there's nothing special to it, but this style's distinct feature is its footwork."

"Are you talking about the steps?"

"No. Honestly, the steps aren't special either. It's just your foot should be aimed in this direction. It's unusual, isn't it?"

"Yes it is. Normally, the stance makes the foot in front bear the weight as the center of balance. That's more efficient and more comfortable. Even if you thoughtlessly land and stand in this direction..."

"Yes, that's normally the case, but if you turn your foot in this direction..."

"It seems you'd be able to kick the enemy who's pushed in and prepared for a sword strike. You may fall, but if you push them enough with your kick, even if you fall, it seems that you'd have bought enough time to stand before they can rush back at you again."

"Yes, you're correct."

In my case, I wouldn't fall after pushing them away with a kick.

It's definitely great.

"But it's not normally a technique that the knights use."

The move itself was devised under the assumption that they're being attacked from both sides and while countering this, they must roll on the floor.

"Yes. I studied existing swordsmanship as a basis to create it. But I've honestly never tested it in actual combat."

"If they're at this level, these movements can definitely be used in actual combat. You're amazing."

Of course, I couldn't just apply her teachings directly into my fights.

I, as well as my opponents, weren't fooled by normal swordsmanship that fit inside a mold.

However, if I theoretically understand the process and the result, the cause and the effect, I could utilize its techniques into other fights or other situations as much as I want to.

It was a worthwhile experience.

At the same time, it was also pretty fun.

At least, our personalities didn't clash and since our area of interest coincided, our trip back to the fort was both valuable and fun.

That's how one week passed and we had arrived in front of the fort.

Kwang!!

I heard a deafening sound before me and I muttered when I saw the fortress gate close.

"They must have caught onto the fact that you were illicitly accumulating money, Lady Seregia."

[TL Note: Remember how she said earlier that her pockets were always full? Yeah, it's probably that.]

"No way. I don't take more than my fair share, Warrior."

So you're saying you did do it.

If they hadn't uncovered Seregia's past crimes, why are the fort's soldiers so hostile?



Just a little while ago, the soldiers that had seen us approach the fortress gate exchanged words noisily and hurriedly entered inside the fort.

Now, suddenly the fortress gate had been closed.

No matter how I think about it, it looks like they're denying our entrance.

Of course, there were a lot of things that stuck out.

Seregia and I had left unannounced and our arrival to the fort was no different.

In the process, we had even secretly used the magic teleportation circle.

We had hid in the fort, watched the battle unfold, and I had even trespassed into the battlefield.

However, I don't think those are issues that they'd lock the fortress gate over.

"What do you think?"

"I also don't really know what's going on. It seems like the commander's up there, so let's hear what he has to say."

Like Seregia said, there was a man wearing a fancy military uniform above the fortress gate.

The man who looked to be the commander yelled at his soldiers.

"Open the gate!"

Just as he ordered, the closed gates started to reopen.

"It seems like there was some sort of mistake, Warrior."

"It seems that way."

It seemed that it was some sort of mistake, but just as I had my hopes up the commander shouted again.

"Get him! Catch the thief who tried to steal the holy sword and

failed!"

Huh? A thief?

Soldiers were pouring out of the reopened gate.

Seregia saw that sight and calmly asked, "Warrior. Did you try to steal the holy sword and fail?"

"No. I pulled it out and then put it back into the ground."

"Why did you try to pull out the sword?"

"I was just... curious."

To be exact, I used the holy sword's power to take a peek at the difficulty of the stage and estimate the Demon King's strength.

There was a little bit of curiosity mixed in there as well.

Seregia seemed to look at me, dumbfounded.

And rather than admonish me with that expression, she asked, "When did you draw the holy sword?"

"The morning of my first day here."

"Did you receive permission before you drew it?"

"I obviously just snuck in."

"I see. Did you take care of the surveillance crystal?"

"What's a surveillance crystal?"

"It's a magic crystal that allows someone to observe a restricted space from another location."

It seems like a magical tool that has a similar function to a CCTV camera.

I didn't even think they'd have something like that.

"No."

"So that was the problem. When you commit a crime, you have to first think about destroying evidence first, Warrior."

"Yes. I'll keep that in mind next time. Do you think it'll be alright if I just say that I had drawn it out of curiosity and put it back?"

"Probably not. Just the fact that you trespassed into the room that seals the holy sword is a serious offense. Above all, if you want to convince them with your words, you'll be arrested and have to go all the way to the capital to meet the ruling authority. And then the transfer and imprisonment process will be considerably rough. You made a mistake, so obediently following them may be correct, but I don't want to."

"Then?"

"Let's just run away. I had already considered disappearing, so everything works out in the end."

It doesn't seem like everything will work out in the end.

I wonder what I should do.

In any case, I have to attain the holy sword in order to clear the stage.

Should I just go right through them?

Just blindly charging through them requires the magic teleportation circle.

I don't know how to use it.

I also don't really know the location of the capital, so I can't just fly there.

While I was pondering, the soldiers that had been rushing towards me stopped in their place.

The stopped soldiers split into two columns and opened up the path.

There appeared some faces that I thought I'd seen before in that gap.

A group of around a hundred men, wearing fancy armor and

equipped with weapons that looked like ornaments approached.

"Hoo hoo. We meet again," the man at the head said.

It seems they are people I've seen somewhere before, considering that he's saying that we're meeting again.

"Lady Seregia. Do you know who they are?"

"They're the warriors, Warrior."

Ah? Ahhh. They're the guys I met on the first day.

It seems that the warrior in front was the one nearby me back then.

There were two points that were surprising.

"You tried to steal the holy sword and failed, and ran away. Aren't you ashamed to be called a Warrior? Lee Ho Jae?" the leading warrior asked.

The number of surprising points went up to three.

"Lady Seregia. How do you think they know my name?"

"During the ceremony, there was a time you told us your name, Warrior. Don't you remember?"

"Did I?"

Since I had just solved one of those surprising points, it's gone back down to two.

"Hm. So what's a fugitive doing at this fortress? Did you perhaps know that we would be coming? Our glorious Warrior group has finished all the Emperor's tests and we're on our way to defeat the Demon King that is being summoned on that mountain range."

The first surprising point was that the guy who calls himself a warrior has the holy sword.

Just because you have the holy sword, it doesn't make you a warrior.

"If you're thinking of asking for forgiveness and taking a spot within our group, then give up. We've already finished all our preparations to defeat the Demon King and we don't need help from the likes of you. Though you showed something at the capital that day..."

The second surprising point was that the prattling Warrior had acquired the holy sword and had appeared here in only fourteen days since the stage started.

It had only taken fourteen days for the contest for the holy sword to be over.

That's surprising.

I had thought it would take around the 33 days like Kiri Kiri had mentioned.

It might've finished quicker because I, the challenger wasn't there.

Let's sort this out.

I had confirmed that the next challenger would have around two weeks to become qualified to wield the holy sword and acquire it.

Also, the entire group dispatched to defeat the Demon King numbered a little over one hundred warriors.

And the holy sword was over there.

The holy sword definitely possessed a tremendous amount of power.

It had enough power to rival the Demon King.

However, drawing out that power depended on the competence of the wielder.

That's how weapons are.

Also, if we combine the holy sword's and that warrior's strength...

It's nowhere near enough.

All the members of the warrior group would be annihilated by the Demon King.

Of course, they're supposed to be supplemented by the challengers' strength but... it still looked like it would be tough.

I summarized all the organized contents in my head and came to a conclusion.

[PR and TL Note: The next few sentences are written in fragments as is the author's style; there are few minor edits.]

The key tasks to clearing the 26th floor are as follows:

Acquire the holy sword within 14 days.

Have a talented swordsman included in the group.

Fight the Demon King on the assumption that the Warrior group and the Empire won't be helpful.

Don't provoke the Demon King and when he's being unsummoned, send him off graciously.

Is this enough?

If socializing is a challenger's forte, they may get along with the Warrior group or may draw the Empire's support, but it won't be of much help.

I finished sorting my thoughts and Seregia was dragging the collar of my hand.

I followed Seregia's line of sight and when I turned my gaze, I saw the reddened faces of the warriors.

Behind them, the other warriors seemed to be uncomfortable as well.

Ah. I had been organizing my thoughts so I hadn't realized that I had been ignoring them this entire time.

"Sorry. I didn't hear you since I was thinking about something

else. What were you saying?"

The Warrior panted and started to say something.

Come to think of it, their clothes have changed.

I guess I can understand how I couldn't identify them right away.

In a few days, they had gotten a bit fatter and their faces looked smoother.

In the case of the female warriors, their skin looked visibly milky-white.

It seems that they were supervised in the capital.

They were summoned as Warriors, so they probably received a warm welcome.

Looking at it this way, I know why the stage doesn't reset even when the round ends.

If it reset, the challengers would intentionally not clear and enjoy their thirty days in luxury and repeat without clearing.

"You, you impudent bastard! You ignore me even to the end..."

I got a hold of myself when I heard the sound of his angry yelling.

I took out a Thousand Arms from my inventory and immediately dashed towards him.

I hadn't rushed into combat because of the Warrior's yelling.

It was because the Warrior had lifted the hilt of the holy sword with his right hand.

If he had just brandished a normal sword at me, I wouldn't pay much attention to him.

Of course, it would worsen my mood.

However, that holy sword was different.

It was a weapon that could easily endanger my life with just a rough swing.

Simultaneously, I considered the Warrior who had the holy sword strapped onto his waist as an 'enemy'.

As soon as I approached the Warrior, I plunged my longsword-shaped Thousand Arms into his chest.

When the Thousand Arms collided with the Warrior's armor, the sword snapped into two pieces.

Although I was flustered from my weapon suddenly breaking, aside from that, I calmly prepared myself.

I discarded the broken Thousand Arms and turned my body to the side, evading the course of his sword draw.

At the same time, I yanked the Warrior's wrist.

The Warrior urgently put strength in his grip so he wouldn't lose the holy sword.

Rather than unreasonably stealing the hilt of the holy sword, I manifested a sharp aura within my left palm and cut off the Warrior's wrist.

After I wrenched the stolen holy sword from his hand, the other warriors behind him dashed towards me.

Taking the holy sword from the Warrior had really only taken an instant.

Despite that, seeing as how the Warrior's colleagues that had been behind him are rushing me simultaneously, I could tell that they also weren't amateurs.

At least, compared to what I had thought.

When I saw them running towards me immediately, I stepped back and slashed diagonally with the holy sword.

No, I tried to slash downwards with the holy sword.

[Hello, Warrior. It's truly an honor to meet you again. Since I'm in your hands again, rather than that half-wit, I feel a lot better.



Normally, you'd have to learn the spell, but I'll give you a special service this time.]

While the sword chattered, it flung a wave of energy from the blade.

[PR Note: For reference, it's like Excalibur's Exalted Blade from Warframe.]

I was surprised by the strength and the attack that had been aimed at the warriors. The warriors were surprised by that strength and the trajectory of the sword that had been aimed at the warriors suddenly turned upwards.

The sword attack flew not at the warriors, but to the rampart behind them.

And as if it were slicing through tofu, a part of the rampart was cleanly sliced off and started to collapse just like that.

The soldiers atop the rampart and the soldiers that had left the fortress gate to capture Seregia and I could do nothing but be swept away.

I saw the soldiers being buried under the collapsing rampart and couldn't help but mutter.

[Hahahaha. How is it, Warrior? I'm the best, right? Right? Would there be another sword like me in the entire world? Now, you'll go without throwing me away, right?]

"...No, this isn't a holy sword. It's a demonic sword."

# Chapter 159 - Tutorial 26th Floor (10)

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[How is it, Warrior? I'm the best, right? Right? I'm the best, right?]

This crazy...

I lifted the chattering holy sword and briefly stood in confusion.

To think it could release this power irrespective of its wielder's will.

What's worse, the intellect behind its will seems to be sharp.

[As I thought, you'd prefer a woman's voice over my performance, Warrior? Please don't worry, Warrior. Until now, whenever I had a chance, I have been practicing. Ah, ah. Tee-hee.]

[TL Note: I omitted the “tee-hee” thing in a previous chapter. He only said it once in that chapter. At the time, I didn't really find a good way to depict his attempt at cutesy speech.]

It didn't have the intelligence of a human, but rather was at the level of an orangutan whose head was hit by a rock.

It also talks.

Though it mostly spewed out mumbo-jumbo.

I can't use this weapon however I wish, so it wouldn't fit into the category of a normal weapon.

If I mishandle it, or if there's discord between us, I could hurt myself with it; but how would anyone be able to use this thing in the first place?

However, despite that...

Rumble—

The lofty rampart is collapsing.

The soldiers under the collapsing rampart were buried under a mound of rubble and wordlessly crushed to death.

After the primary damage caused by the falling rocks, the small hill of debris surged towards the surrounding soldiers like a landslide and likewise crushed them.

The warriors hurriedly moved from their positions, so that they wouldn't be buried as well.

I heard the screams and moans from the warrior whose hand I sliced off, as well as from the soldiers who had lost their comrades.

[Tee-hee?]

This crazy...

You're saying that this is a holy sword?

I feel like it's something that I have to throw into the pits of Mount Doom.

[PR Note: Mount Doom is a Lord of the Rings reference. It's a big scary volcano with a lava pit at its peak.]

However, I still have a reason to not roughly throw this sword away.

Bzzzt. Bzzzzz.

I examined the sword that rang out with a sound similar to purring.

I regret that this sword had settled in and found its rightful place in my hands.

I'd like to immediately throw away the sword in my hand.

However, this sword would definitely split even the sky as a result.

The warrior who had lost his hand and was crying...

I now know why the warrior who had lost his hand and was crying had been so confident.

Also, I understood why he was so easily worked up and when he became agitated, why his hand went to the hilt of the sword.

If you were to suddenly acquire this strength overnight, you'd definitely be like that.

If I were to think about that Warrior's level, he must've felt like he had become a god overnight.

"It's definitely a demonic sword."

[I'm disappointed, Warrior. I really am a holy sword. In fact, I've received a blessing from the God of the Sky.]

I have no idea what the God of the Sky was thinking.

The god's blessing may have enhanced the sword's power, but this sword is definitely not a sacred sword.

It was a sword that drove its wielder to his death.

I felt that it was fortunate that this sword had been sealed in the basement of the capital.

If this sword had been dropped in the middle of the continent, there would be a countless number of deaths in that region.

The Empire might've summoned the warriors because they didn't want to give this sword to one of its knights.

It was an absent minded notion , but when I thought of it that way I really felt that it was truly how things were.

[I love you, Warrior. I'm not just saying this because I'm in your hand. When I was in that half-wit's hand, do you know how much I tried to reach you? Tut. That half-wit wouldn't listen to a word I said.]

"What did you do then?"

[Uh, Oh? Hahaha. It's a secret. I love you. Warrior.]

Looking at how this guy talks, it seems like he urged that Warrior to fight with me.

I really should throw it into a volcano; I feel like this sword is fit to be dropped into lava.

That's what I thought.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty 26h floor, perfect clear.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 5000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 5000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 9000 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 300 points have been deducted.]

[All of the Gods of the Temple of the Hundred Gods are watching you.]

[TL Note: Changed White Holy Temple to this. White Holy Temple was an incorrect translation, but I got lazy and copy-pasted the original translation. I'm really unsure when I should change terms that people are so used to, but this one REALLY bothered me. I try not to change the previous translators' translations.]

[The God of the Sky would like to gift you a divine item instead of an additional reward. Would you like to accept?]

[Live Voting Results: 20 For. 19 Against.]

[The God of Light would like you to become his disciple.]

[Would you like to undergo the test to prove your worthiness to become a disciple?]

Messages started to appear tumultuously.

A perfect clear.

The Demon King had drawn out his true power, but I had defeated him alone.

In the process of getting the holy sword, not only did I not receive the trial of the holy sword, but it cornered the original

owner into a deadly situation as well in order to be owned by me.

They were definitely conditions for a perfect clear.

The next thing I have to check is... the bonus rewards and the disciple offer.

First I'll check out the bonus rewards.

"I accept."

[The Holy Sword of the Sky, Ahoubuch has been acquired.]

...Holy sword?

The message appeared and at the same time, the holy sword in my hands disappeared.

I opened my inventory.

It was there.

The holy sword was in my inventory.

[The Holy Sword of the Sky, Ahoubuch]

Explanation: The God of the Sky, in order to punish arrogant humans, gifted this sword to the most arrogant of humans, the Empire's Emperor. The Emperor who had received the present, and the next representing Emperor, and the next representing Emperor, and the next representing Emperor were all swallowed up in a series of incidents caused by the holy sword and died.

As I thought, it's a holy sword in name only.

Its actual effect wasn't very different from the biblical story of God's flood that punished humans.

To have killed four generations of Emperors, what exactly did this sword do?

While that was happening, the Empire could neither discard the sword nor break it.

I don't know if it was due to the sword's overwhelming power or

that they didn't want to anger the god, but this sword is definitely a demonic sword.

I should just shove this into my inventory and leave it.

Aside from the sword's heinousness, this sword has an excessively high degree of power.

If I use it immediately, tremendous results would be shown, but I won't have the opportunity to grow for quite some time.

Of course, if it were a normal challenger, they'll just think of it as a tremendous reward.

I think that the gods fixed the balance so that twenty five people would proceed through the stage.

However, if I draw out the maximum strength of this sword, I won't be able to face any danger that's actually dangerous for quite some time.

It's an excessive reward for me.

The next thing I had to check was the disciple offer.

The God of Light had offered me to become his disciple.

I pondered briefly and after I made my decision, I put it off.

I hadn't replied to the God of Death's offer to become a disciple yet.

I'll get some advice from Kiri Kiri and carefully make my decision.

Of course, in order to get advice about the gods, as well as information on them, I'll have to wait a long time though.

Rather than lacking in strength right now, I'm actually overflowing with power.

The stage had increased in difficulty and that's what I had wanted, but I didn't have a reason to obsess over possibly getting a new god skill.

I would first have to improve my own abilities.

Then, I can just receive the authorities after that.

I finished sorting everything out and saw the portal.

Should I depart immediately?

"Warrior."

Behind me, I heard a voice I hadn't been thinking about.

It was Seregia.

"Ah, Lady Seregia. You have worked hard all this time. Thank you for taking care of me."

"I'm sorry?"

"I think I'm going to head out now. It seems like this is where we part ways."

Seregia, who had been behind me, stood in front of me, and said, "Can't you take me with you?"

"Yes. That's a little..."

"Warrior."

"Yes?"

Seregia spoke with a serious expression.

It seemed that she had her usual expressionless face, but after seeing it several times, I could tell the differences between them.

"You said last time that so long as I don't die, you can't take me with you."

"Yes... I did say that but..."

That's a bad habit.

It might've been because I've spent so much time alone, but after all the tension is gone, my thoughts just spew out sometimes.

Talking to myself was bad in various ways.



Let's fix that soon.

"If that's really the case, I'll die and follow you."

"... Lady Seregia."

"Warrior, look at that."

The moment I was going to try to convince the insisting Seregia, Seregia pointed behind her.

The fortress had collapsed and the soldiers were dying.

Using the pretext of helping the soldiers, the warriors were running away from us.

Rather than saving the soldiers, it looked like they were running away from me no matter who saw it.

"You said that if I wanted to follow you, I had to die, Warrior, but even if I don't follow you, I'll die. Even if I somehow escape from here, I'll be chased."

That's probably the case.

If Seregia is left alone like this, she will be pursued by the Empire.

Also, she'll harbor the crime of destroying the fortress and stealing the holy sword all by herself.

She'll definitely die, 100%.

I was scratching my head and Seregia took out a dagger from her chest.

"As I said, I'll die and follow you."

And she forcefully stabbed her chest.

Blood spurted out from her chest.

I sighed.

I thought she would die because she was so bold.

Seregia didn't die.

Although it may look like it, the dagger hadn't pierced her heart.

I didn't need to use my elixir. If Seregia just uses the health potion that she has, she can sufficiently treat the wound.

Of course, if she just left it alone like that for a long time, she could die from excessive bleeding.

"Warrior."

Seregia may have thought about it like this:

My path is too dangerous and that I couldn't bring her along.

So, if she didn't have the resolve to die, I couldn't bring her with me.

So she showed that she was prepared to die if need be.

However, that's not it.

I really can't take her with me unless she dies.

"Lady Seregia. Are you really prepared to die?" I asked abruptly.

Honestly, I didn't think it'd be much of a problem.

Personally, there was only a faint boundary between life and death.

Whether that line actually existed was the question.

That's why I was ready to take her with me if she wanted to.

That's why I could ask her so easily.

If she would really die.

"As I had said, even if I stay here, I'll die."

So that I could progress the conversation quicker, I gave her a clear explanation.

"Lady Seregia. If you go with me, it won't be that it'll be so dangerous that you'll die. For starters, if you want to go with me, you have to die."

"... Is it necromancy?"

"No. Rather than that, it's closer to the art of death."

[TL Note: Korean doesn't really have a lot of proper "fantasy" words, so they borrow terms from other languages. In the previous sentence, the author uses the borrowed Korean term for necromancy while in Seregia's dialogue, 'necromancy' is spelled out how it would be pronounced in English.]

Seregia briefly stood wordlessly, all the while the dagger was still lodged in her chest.

"Think about it slowly. I can at least give you enough time to think about it."

While Seregia was thinking about it, I also thought about it.

About what decision she'd make.

She'd probably stab herself.

If I were her, that's what I'd do.

With a soft squelch, the dagger lodged in her chest wedged all the way in until the hilt.

She pierced her heart.

[Soul Siphon]

I wanted to reduce her pain at least a little so I activated Soul Siphon.

After she had pierced her heart, Seregia was exposed to Soul Siphon and quickly died.

[Soul Collect]

I verified that Seregia's soul had been collected and I tried summoning her soul.

Seregia's form appeared in midair.

Compared to the other small palm-sized souls, Seregia's soul was

as big as a forearm.

If we exclude the fact that she looks slightly blurry, she looked exactly like she did when she was alive.

"How do you feel?"

[I feel great. If I had known it would be like this, I wouldn't have hesitated and I would've died sooner.]

Seregia moved her body here and there and started to drift around as if she were swimming.

She adapted really quickly.

I looked at Seregia, who was muttering some nonsense while flying around her surroundings, and stepped atop the portal.

"Teleport."

I left the 26th floor stage and moved to Kiri Kiri's field.

As usual, it was a peaceful and beautiful field, but there a few things that caught my attention.

To be exact, two things.

The first was that Seregia, who had been floating in the air beside me, disappeared.

The second was that I didn't see Kiri Kiri.

# Chapter 160 - Tutorial 26th Floor (11)

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After I moved to Kiri Kiri's field, it wasn't that surprising to me that Seregia disappeared.

Something like this had happened before.

The same thing happened when Idy, who had been summoned through the Summon Dead skill, had visited here.

Kiri Kiri said that only I, the challenger, would be invited into this field, and Idy was temporarily unsummoned.

If I go back to the waiting room, I should be able to summon Seregia again.

Rather, not seeing Kiri Kiri was more surprising.

I think that this has never happened before.

Kiri Kiri had other things to do besides sunbathe in this field.

She definitely had work to do.

Also, she felt that that work was quite important.

Kiri Kiri didn't seem to be the type that would shirk her responsibilities without a reason.

I can think of two reasons.

The first possibility is this.

Kiri Kiri ran into a problem.

It was a problem big enough that she shied away from her responsibilities.

The second possibility was this.

Kiri Kiri is here.

It's just that she's hiding.

If it's the second possibility, it's not hard to get Kiri Kiri to show herself.

Without pondering further, I decided to test it.

I didn't need to draw the Seal of Solomon and bought a few cakes from the store window.

[TL and PR Note: Literally translates as the Star of David, but we thought Seal of Solomon made more sense. The Star of David has nothing to do with summoning. He doesn't need an elaborate pattern to summon her, he just needs cake.]

I spread out a mat on the floor and laid out the cakes I bought.

And I briefly waited.

If Kiri Kiri is hiding, she should be right in front of me.

Drooling.

"Kiri Kiri."

"Uh, yeah?"

I heard a voice in the air.

As I expected, she's easy to read.

Like usual, I couldn't see her or detect her presence.

"Do you want to eat some cake?"

"Can I? But I lost the bet..."

[TL Note: I have no idea how to translate her “cutesy” speech. It has no real English equivalent and it makes the words sound weird. Besides stretching Ho Jae’s name, she also tends to speak in a cute way, kind of like how some Koreans write their cell phone messages.]

"You can eat it. If not, then well... If you don't then that's fine. You don't want any?"

"I want some!"

I heard a sonorous voice in the air and a slice of cake flew into the air.

After the cake shot up into the air, the number of cakes I laid out started to decrease.

It seemed that the pieces of cake that disappeared by the moment were going into Kiri Kiri's mouth.

"Kiri Kiri. I can't see you."

As soon as I finished speaking, I began to be able to make out Kiri Kiri's form.

As I had thought, Kiri Kiri was picking up a cake and ferociously stuffing the cake into her mouth.

You'll have an upset stomach if you keep eating like that.

What reason would I have for bullying Kiri Kiri by not buying her cakes?

The bet was just a way to kill time and there was no reason to make her sulk.

The cakes are a bit expensive, but Kiri Kiri always more than makes up for their price.

With information, that is.

It was also cute seeing her eat.

"Yeah!"

What do you mean by 'yeah' all of a sudden?

"It's great to eat!"

What are you talking about out of the blue.

That doesn't add up at all.

"Yeah, go ahead and eat a lot."

"Yeah!"

I watched as Kiri Kiri gobbled up the cakes and waited for her to finish.

Contrary to the other floors where I didn't really have any

pending questions to ask, I was full of questions about the recent developments.

I reviewed the list of questions in my head and organized my thoughts.

"Now you'll answer my questions sincerely, right?"

Kiri Kiri vigorously nodded her head.

She took out a handkerchief and with a beaming smile, wiped her mouth and said, "Ask anything!"

Kiri Kiri folded her arms and responded confidently.

Before the buff effect of the cakes wore off, it'd be best to ask her my questions quickly.

"For the last few days, my exhaustion won't go away."

"Heng. That's natural."

"It's natural? I also drank an elixir, leveled up, drank a health potion, and recovered via the clear reward, but my fatigue isn't going away, even in this field."

"That's because it's not simply fatigue. It can't be helped."

"Can you explain it in detail?"

"Yeah. Strictly speaking, what you're feeling right now, Hooooujae, isn't physical exhaustion."

"Then?"

"It's closer to mental fatigue."

"Are you talking about stress?"

Kiri Kiri fiddled with her long ears and said, "You're not wrong, but it's more correct to say that excessive concentration has strained your brain."

"My brain? Due to my concentration?"

"Yeah."



That's a surprise.

Honestly, I was really confident in my ability to concentrate.

I didn't think I'd lack focus and have these kinds of side effects.

"Rather than lacking focus, it's better to say that you focused too much. If you're human, you would never maintain even a moment of such an extremely tense state throughout your entire life; however, you maintained that extremely tense state for several days, and for several hours at a time."

"It's that bad? Is this by any chance really severe? Or incurable?"

"It's not to that point. It'd be simpler to think of it as muscle pain."

Muscle pain, huh.

I overtaxed my brain cells.

"You really overworked them. Even if you drive out the exhaustion through a healing effect, your brain will remember it. That overload is because you're overtaxing your brain. No healing method has a memory-erasing effect."

"Can this be healed?"

"Nope. The best solution is to just empty your head for a few days and rest completely."

"And after I rest, the exhaustion will disappear?"

"Yeah."

It's alright.

I'll rest for a few days and practice swordsmanship with Seregia.

"Heng. You'll have to figure out for yourself if you can really call that resting. It doesn't seem like you'll listen to me, either."

Let's move on to the next question.

"About the level up rewards..."

"Like I said before, don't worry about those anymore."

"No, aside from the stats and skills rewards, even the level up recovery effect is gone. What's going on here?"

Usually when you level up, your overall condition is restored to perfect health.

However, when I was covered in wounds in the aftermath of the Light Sword, I didn't realize that I had leveled up until after I drank the elixirs and recovered from my wounds.

Basically, I didn't get the healing effect from my level ups.

"Ah... that."

Kiri Kiri didn't immediately respond to my question.

That's a big deal.

In most cases, Kiri Kiri immediately answers me.

"We're in the middle of voting."

"Voting?"

"Yeah. I'll tell you about it later. Even if I were to tell you about it, it really wouldn't be all that useful to you and it's just expensive information. The only thing I can tell you for sure is that you shouldn't be worried about level ups from now on."

I briefly paused my questioning and thought about it, but nothing came to mind.

I didn't know anything about it, so there's no point in making blind guesses.

As Kiri Kiri said, it'd be better to hear it from her next time.

"I got it. Next, I have a question about disciples. I don't know if my allowance is enough for information though."

"The God of Light?"

"Yeah."

"I recommend saving up some more. Since you still haven't heard about the God of Death yet."

"Yeah. Then let's move on the next question."

Unconcerned, I moved to a new subject.

From the start, I hadn't expected to hear information regarding the gods or disciples this time.

I had also thought about accepting the God of Death's and the God of Light's offers blindly.

However, I didn't really need to do that.

What I need right now isn't a skill from a god.

I was already struggling with developing my current abilities.

The difficulty was far easier than I expected.

The Demon King that appeared on the 26th floor was quite strong.

No, he honestly was much stronger than me.

His appearance was like rain after a drought.

However, I couldn't be sure that a formidable opponent like the Demon King would appear on the upcoming stages.

Of course, it would be nice if they did.

What's worse, even that Demon King was in the category of opponents that I was confident I could definitely beat.

From here, if I gain a few more god skills, my growth may stagnate for a while.

Perhaps I would delay accepting their offer to become their disciple even after receiving advice from Kiri Kiri regarding the gods.

[The God of Adventure is happy.]

[The God of Light hates someone.]

[The God of Death is bored.]

"Next is the holy sword. About the holy sword that the God of the Sky gifted to me. If I had used that, I think the stage would've been too easy. Did they give me the wrong item?"

"You're right. That's true."

"What? They gave me the wrong item?"

"No. Not that. Honestly, even now the stage is easy for you."

"That's true."

"That's probably why they gave it to you. They thought that they'd never see you struggle in a stage, so instead they probably wanted to see how you would act if they gave you a weapon. That's probably what the gods who voted for it were thinking. Honestly, most gods aren't concerned about the difficulty setup or how fair it is for the challengers. There's something else that's important."

I brooded on Kiri Kiri's words and thought about them.

When I had acquired the holy sword, I saw this kind of explanation.

It was a punishment sent by the God of the Sky, in order to punish the arrogant humans.

Would it have been given to me for a similar reason?

"Then why would the gods have been against it?"

"Eh. They probably all had their separate reasons. They might've not wanted you to attain the holy sword, Hooooujae, or they didn't want you to get influenced by it, or they didn't want you to accept the God of the Sky's present, or they might've just hated the God of the Sky."

Influence, huh.

If we exclude the gods that have a bad relationship with the God of the Sky, all of them have reasons to oppose the present based on

the influence of the holy sword or a connection to it.

It's certainly a demonic sword that could influence me.

"Or they might just hate you, Hoooooujae."

"...That can happen?"

"Yeah. There are gods that continue to hate you. Hehe."

When Kiri Kiri was finished talking, she was laughing contently to the side.

What's so funny?

I'm being hated by gods.

Some of the gods definitely hate me all the time.

For example, the God of Nature.

The God of Life and the God of the Sky among them too, but it seems like after what happened, the God of the Sky changed his mind.

No, seeing as how he gave me the holy sword, he might actually harbor a malevolent attitude towards me.

Apart from them, there were a few gods that didn't respond much but occasionally appeared and would exhibit a negative reaction.

I'm hated by gods.

How should I think about this?

"Kiri Kiri."

"Yeah, they can't."

"Huh?"

"You tried asking me this on the 4th floor, right? To what extent the gods can meddle with you."

"Yeah."

"They can't interfere with you. Unless all the gods of the Temple of the Hundred Gods agree to that interference. However, that probably won't happen."

[TL and PR Note: Just a reminder. White Holy Temple was incorrect and will now be translated as "Temple of the Hundred Gods" (100 God Temple), denoting that there are one hundred gods watching over Hojae.]

"Are you sure?" I asked again, after hearing Kiri Kiri's confident tone.

"I'm sure. Also, if that happens, nothing bad will happen to you, Hooooujae. The god's interference is limited to just that."

[TL and PR Note: The author is really ambiguous about a lot of things. "That" refers to their interference and seems to be limited to things like giving items, skills, etc.]

So that's how it is.

Hm...

It's good information.

It's valuable information.

However, as I heard this information, my level of anxiety actually heightened.

I had asked about this information a few times in the past.

The response back then was that the information was too expensive and she couldn't tell me.

This was especially precious information.

"Kiri Kiri. How much more until I meet my quota?"

"You've pretty much used it all up."

Damn it.

I had mostly spent my quota that I had saved up to ask about the God of Death.

I had been saving it since the 21st floor too.

"Heh."

I wanted to wring the nose of the jubilantly-laughing Kiri Kiri but I did my best to hold back.

There was definitely a reason that Kiri Kiri had explained this information to me at this time, even if I had to spend most of my saved quota.

Even if I had to wait on listening to an explanation about the God of Death and the God of Light; there was a reason why I had to hear it.

That's what I thought as I passed onto the next subject.

"Kiri Kiri. Then, can you tell me about the abilities of the holy sword with the rest of my allowance?"

"I can. But are you going to use that holy sword?"

"No. For now, I'm thinking of just stashing it in my inventory."

However, I needed to know the holy sword's powers, so I can use it if need be.

"I got it. You just need to check your inventory when you go back to the waiting room."

Now I had asked roughly everything I had wanted to ask.

I thought for a moment if there was something I missed.

The Thousand Arms.

I forgot to ask her about the Thousand Arms that smashed into the Warrior's armor and split into two.

I asked Kiri Kiri why the Thousand Arms was suddenly destroyed upon impact.

"It broke because of the excessive concentration of mana."

"The concentration of mana?"

Is she talking about the Light Sword?

I'd definitely thought back then that the amount of mana I'd gathered was outrageous.

"Yeah. That. Since the Thousand Arms is closer to a magical tool than a weapon, it's weak to the concentration of mana. Also."

"Also?"

"Before the collision, the deciding factor was the holy sword's Dispel, which cancelled the built-in durability magic. Moreover, its durability had already declined and the built-in support magic disappeared, so it immediately broke."

...The holy sword cast Dispel on the Thousand Arms?

If by any chance, the Thousand Arms was destroyed, did the holy sword think that I'd use it instead?

It was really a demonic sword that I wanted to throw into lava.

"You probably won't be able to use the Thousand Arms that's in pieces. The waiting room's effect won't restore it. It also won't change into other shapes. You have another one, so you can just use that."

I sighed.

I didn't think that one of my Thousand Arms would be damaged this quickly.

The crucial problem was that my Light Sword had greatly diminished the durability of the Thousand Arms, irregardless of the holy sword casting Dispel.

If I use my Light Sword often with such a high concentration of mana...

I probably won't be able to use my Thousand Arms anymore.

The Thousand Arms isn't just a weapon since it can be used as a shield, gear, props, or a magical tool.



Rather than use the last remaining Thousand Arms as a sword, I thought it'd be better to obtain a new weapon.

"Kiri Kiri. I'm thinking of buying a new sword. What do you think?"

# Chapter 161 - Tutorial 27th Floor (Waiting Room)

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[Kilimanshatu's Soul Sword]

Explanation: This is the soul sword found in the Kilimanshatu Dungeon. The materials used for this sword and the method its manufacturing are unknown, but this sword is capable of housing a soul. Based on the records found in the Kilimanshatu Dungeon, a certain king in an ancient kingdom placed his soul inside this sword and dreamt of eternal life.

A sword that can house a soul, you say.

"Heh."

Seeing as how Kiri Kiri is beaming and laughing, I can be absolutely sure.

She had recommended this sword because of Seregia.

So I can put her soul into this sword and travel together with her.

For now, that was enough of a reason for me to buy this sword.

However, I looked around meticulously in case they had any other long swords.

The item that Kiri Kiri had recommended and passed to me was peculiar in various ways.

It wasn't just because of its ability to infuse a soul within itself.

"What exactly is this sword made of? It doesn't seem like it's made of metal but rock."

I felt the blade with my fingers and was met with the rough texture of a rock.

It wasn't a sword made of a refined metal.

"You're right! It wasn't refined. Because of that, the edge is a little

dull. I'm saying this just in case, but don't try to sharpen the blade yourself. Since it won't sharpen."

"Because it's too tough?"

"Yeah."

"If that's the case, in exchange for having a blunt edge, it shouldn't break or chip."

Kiri Kiri kept nodding her head.

Due to its unusually strong density, it was a sword that even I couldn't sharpen.

I guess I should be relieved that they managed to mold it into the shape of a sword.

I touched the end of the sword.

The blade that should've been sharp was smooth.

Rather than a sword, it was closer to a thin yet sturdy club.

If it's a sword where slashing and stabbing are impossible, then I have to use it like a blunt weapon regardless of its shape.

"Heng. Look a little closer."

Just as Kiri Kiri said, I examined the sword on a closer level.

Its size and weight wasn't much different from the Thousand Arm's in its long sword form.

It was at a weight that would be difficult for normal people to lift, but this weight is just right for me.

Next I infused my mana into the sword.

And then I understood why Kiri Kiri had recommended this sword.

I only infused a small quantity of mana, but gleaming blue mana formed around the sword's edge.

The sword possessed an extremely high level of mana

conductivity.

Certainly, if there had been a sword this specialized for mana, there wouldn't be any reason for me to try to sharpen the edge.

"I'll choose this."

The sale was finalized and I paid with my points.

A considerable amount of points were just spent in one go, but I thought that the sword was worth it.

"Good choice. It's the best sword amongst the ones you can buy, so you shouldn't have to swap it out for a while."

Definitely.

That's also how I feel as the one holding this sword in my hands.

It's different from the holy sword that can unleash magical effects, but this is plenty good enough.

I enveloped my sword with aura and closed my eyes.

"Eh? What are you trying to do?"

When I swung the holy sword on the 26th floor, the holy sword passed through space and slashed the distant rampart.

Without any resistance.

The blade drew a line in the sky and just like it had cut through the air, split apart the distant rampart.

I wonder how that was possible?

This wasn't as if the aura had instantly extended by several meters and slashed through the rampart.

It also wasn't as if the aura was shot over a long distance.

It's not the kind of skill that closes distances like Blink Strike.

The holy sword just cut through space and also just cut through the rampart in its path.

I threw the Thousand Arms that had broken into two pieces into

the air.

The doppelganger Magician had said this.

Magic's inconvenient magic formulas, trigger words, hand seals and incantations were essentially all set-up for the same goal.

They unveiled and demonstrated the method to using and manipulating the miraculous tool known as magic.

I threw the Thousand Arms up into the air and it soon dropped to the ground in an arc.

I'm trying to better understand this natural phenomenon and also demonstrate the change that I desire.

For example, if it were a type of flying magic, it would explain the phenomenon of how the Thousand Arms drew a parabola in the air.

And in that incantation, the miraculous tool of mana would be put into it.

The incantation that's filled with mana is based on the user's will and will activate in accordance with the structured magical formula.

This is the main foundation of basic magic.

In short, the important things are mana and intent.

Aura was also the same.

Following the magic circuits, mana would be transferred to the sword and would just flow into the blade itself.

Of course, just with that the sword should become a bit more durable.

The mana that coats the skin makes the body healthier and sturdier.

The muscles that are suffused with mana are also stronger and allow for faster movements.

However, that's all.

That mana must embody a swordsman's firm will in order to manifest aura for the first time.

Also, the next step was to give that manifested aura a special characteristic.

In order to give it a special characteristic, the first thing you need to do is imagine in your head what you want to manifest.

What would be the image most similar to the effect desired?

The Light Sword was friction.

Through friction, I would create an explosive light and heat.

That force in its entirety would be placed into the sword and I would transfer that energy in the direction I release it.

That was the foundation of the Light Sword.

If that's the case, what would be the key word for the technique that the holy sword had shown?

Amplification, leap, throw, illusion. There are probably a lot of possibilities.

I couldn't ask someone for the details nor could I learn about it, so I couldn't be sure.

The only thing I could do is use my senses to try to figure it out.

What I thought of was conveyed.

I cut the open space, and my will to cut traveled further and materialized in a distant area.

The Thousand Arms that I had thrown into the air started to fall to the ground.

I waited a little longer.

It was within a range that I could reach, my usual attack range.

No, it was closer than that.

The range that my will could reach was about the length of my arm.

I slowly lowered my soul sword that was over my head.

Slowly.

Like a petal softly falling in the wind.

I forlornly dropped my sword down.

I locked the whirling power into my grip and my sword, though I looked like I was at peace from the outside.

When the soul sword that had descended at a slow speed stopped in place, simultaneously...

Ting.

The Thousand Arms that had been dropping on my left side seemed like it was hit by something and slightly rose up.

Would it really not work?

[TL Note: The author isn't very clear about this, but he's attempting to replicate the space slash that the holy sword had performed.]

I had attempted it because I felt like I could do it.

For some reason, it seems that I couldn't live up to my expectations; it just felt awkward.

"...If a swordsman that was training for that saw you, they wouldn't just let you go."

"Well, I failed though."

"Heng. They'd try to kill you."

"Do you want to drink an elixir?"

"It won't help."

What did she say?

I was laying on the floor and stretched my exhausted body.

I pointlessly overdid it.

I'm really tired.

"Of course you are. How long has it been since I've told you not to overdo it and rest; then you go and do something crazy."

Kiri Kiri's voice was a little sharp.

What do you mean by something crazy?

"I'm in the middle of regretting it so stop nagging me."

Kiri Kiri, who was crouching over my head, slapped my forehead.

"If you keep going on like that, you'll really die."

"I'll die?"

"Yeah. Your body will explode and you'll die."

Are you serious?

"Are you serious?"

"I'm serious. Until now, you've grown in that manner and it's more strange that you haven't contracted any side effects. If you go on like this, your magic circuits may get blocked, or you'll have holes poked somewhere, or you'll get twisted around somewhere and you'll die. If that happens, you can't even treat it. Even if you're in the waiting room, it'll just prolong your life and if you go outside, there's a high possibility of instant death. Even if you don't die instantly, you'd die soon."

So it's like destroying myself.

"Yeah. Just like that."

I should be careful.

Just like there's a push to every pull , there's an equal and opposite reaction to my growth.

That's what I think.

If I train my muscles, muscular pain follows.



If I exercise, the time spent exercising as well as the muscular pain results in an increase in muscular mass.

The more I grow, the faster I grow, and as I develop further, that price will increase.

Also, if my body can't handle that price in its entirety, that excessive growth speed could become poisonous to me.

"Am I right?" I asked Kiri Kiri.

"Yeah," Kiri Kiri affirmed.

From now on, I should also focus on increasing my body's durability.

Rather than using self-injury to increase my resistance skills, my entire body itself has to become stronger.

Blowing myself up when using the Light Sword technique alone, or my body not keeping up when I reach a new stage are situations that cannot happen.

[TL Note: New stage/level of strength, not necessarily a new tutorial stage.]

My body has already reached a level where it's difficult to see me as human, but there's still room for growth.

Let's try a variety of methods.

If I don't have any success with it, I'll just ask Kiri Kiri in the next stage for a more concrete method.

Now my planning is done.

Since it feels like I've rested as much as I need to, let's go to the waiting room already.

I dusted off my pants and stood up.

"Ah, about the next floor," Kiri Kiri said abruptly.

"Oh. The next floor. I forgot to listen to your tips about the next floor. Is there anything that I should keep in mind?"

"Yeah. You have to pick the right guide. That's it."

Considering how meager the tips were, it didn't seem like the next floor would be that difficult.

I felt unnecessarily dejected and walked atop the portal.

"Take care. You have to come back soon!"

Kiri Kiri scampered around and said goodbye.

I haven't heard a goodbye in a long time.

When we were betting, she hadn't said anything about coming back soon.

"Yeah, I'll come back soon and buy you some cake."

I saw Kiri Kiri's beaming face as I was transported out of the waiting room.

"How are you? Are you dizzy, Lady Seregia?" I asked Seregia.

To be precise, I asked Seregia who was inside my soul sword.

[I feel great, Warrior. Would you like to try it out with some moves right now?]

As Seregia suggested, I slowly swung my sword.

While I swung my sword, Seregia spoke softly and kept muttering the same thing repeatedly.

"What did you say?"

[I'm happy.]

"I'm sorry?"

[If I knew it would be like this, if I was born as a sword, I think I would've been happier.]

That's a little... Is that normal?

It seems that she likes the feeling of being a soul inside the sword.

[Maybe it's because I don't have to rely on my eyes, nose, or lips,

but my peripheral vision has greatly expanded. I can also see both yours and the sword's movements, Warrior. Really.]

That's a relief.

As I had thought, Seregia could just observe my movements when I'm fighting.

Sort of like a black box.

After the battle, using her observations, she should be able to give me more detailed and precise feedback.

It was unlike her, but Seregia spoke a bit quicker.

[I really like it!]

"... Is that so?"

[Warrior. From this point on, let's make our goal to reach the peak of swordsmanship. This sword that I'm in, if even for an instant I can reach the ultimate peak of swordsmanship, then even if I die, I'll have no regrets.]

But Lady Seregia, you're already dead.

[No, I've already died. Let me correct myself. After I'm reborn, I'll have no regrets even if I die again.]

She was so positive and bright that I couldn't get used to it.

"Lady Seregia. Do you really not feel regret or sadness? Still, you were born as a human and died once."

[I'm a little sad that I can't eat snacks anymore, but I feel like I'll be happier living as a sword. Since my goal from the beginning was to follow you and see that swordsmanship. Of course, if I had become a common soldier's sword, then I would've been far more anguished than I am now.]

Seregia looked like she was really enjoying this.

Like she said, it seemed that she enjoyed it more than being alive.

I could even tell from the way she was speaking.

The speed at which she spoke hastened and above all, she spoke more.

[I wonder if this sword can handle that technique that you displayed on the summit of the mountain? Also, will I be able to endure it? If I can, I wouldn't have to worry about my sight being burned away and I should be able to clearly see that process. Wow! I'm so happy!]

She's a completely different person... Her personality has changed.

Does everyone become like this when they become a sword spirit?

I took out my other sword with an ego from my inventory.

As soon as I took out the demonic sword that used the moniker of a holy sword, it started to whine.

[Warrior, Warrior, Warrior, Warrior. Oh, Warrior. Why did you do that?]

"What's with you again?"

[Please don't lock me up in there again, Warrior. Please. I beg of you. I love you, Warrior.]

"My inventory?"

[Yes! There's no notion of time in that damn subspace! Warrior, if you lock me up in there again, I may go crazy.]

Are you like a Pikachu that doesn't want to go into a Pokeball?

Why don't you just threaten me?

It's become difficult.

I fundamentally store all my items inside my inventory.

However, if I can't put the holy sword into my inventory... that means I have to keep it with me all the time.

What's worse, I may have to carry around the soul sword that

Seregia is in all the time.

"Is it that bad?"

[Yes! If you make a mistake I might be damaged, Warrior.]

I don't think it can be helped.

Even if I don't plan to use the holy sword, I can't just let the holy sword break.

There may be a time where there is an urgent need to use it.

Also, after I've reached a sufficiently high stage, I may start using the holy sword.

I took out the Thousand Arms from my inventory.

Between the two Thousand Arms, one of them was broken, but the other was still unscathed.

[Cough. Warrior. Please just throw away that crude toy! I'm a much better sword. Really. I was even blessed by the God of the Sky.]

It may have thought that I'd use the Thousand Arms instead of the holy sword, and the holy sword hastily responded.

[I-If you want to know how much strength I possess, Warrior. One moment. Please don't put me back into the inventory yet. I'll explain everything!]

You don't need to.

I asked Kiri Kiri and already got the explanation.

[The Holy Sword of the Sky, Ahoubuch]

Explanation: The God of the Sky, in order to punish the arrogant humans, gifted this divine item to them.

The sword would pull the surrounding people, including the owner into a bloody, desperate battle, with him at the center.

An owner who is exposed to its power for a long time would

become extremely arrogant or they may exhibit perpetual bloodthirst.

Aside from the owner's will, there was a sword spirit called Ahoubuch dwelling inside of the blade.

Damage Prevention Magic is infused.

Hardness Reinforcement Magic is infused.

Sharpness Reinforcement Magic is infused.

Dispel Magic is infused.

Magic Shield Magic is infused.

Rapid Mana Recharge Magic is infused.

Magic Amplification Magic is infused.

Floating Magic is infused.

Flying Magic is infused.

Cleanliness Magic is infused.

The sword spirit can use the holy sword's magic at its own discretion.

The sword spirit is capable of casting all magics requiring less than three circles, including the stored magic.

The sword spirit can cast the holy spells of the cult of the sky god without any cost.

The sword spirit can manifest aura around the sword using its own will.

If the possessor is acknowledged by the God of the Sky, the sword can act as a conduit for him to receive the god's blessing.

I can only say that these specs are really crazy.

There was a tremendous amount of mana equipped to the holy sword itself, and the holy sword's performance that could handle that mana was even greater.

That's why even if there's a strange sword spirit within, I can't just thoughtlessly discard it.

I turned my Thousand Arms into the form of a sheath.

And I put the holy sword into that sheath.

The Thousand Arms matched the holy sword's length and width by adjusting its size.

"There, it's fine if I just carry you around like this, right?"

[Yes! Warrior!]

"In exchange, you have to promise me a few things. You cannot thoughtlessly use your power. If you are to use your power, you need to get my permission beforehand. Also, for a while, your role won't be to cut down my enemies, but while in that sheath, it'll be fine to just talk about swordsmanship. And don't be so disappointed, too."

[Yes, I understand. Warrior.]

He certainly responds properly.

Well, that's that.

"I'm not a warrior anymore, so you don't have to call me a warrior anymore."

[I'm sorry? You weren't a Warrior?]

"Yeah."

[Then what should I call you?]

"I wonder."

When I really think about it, there's no fitting name that comes up.

[Then... Master? Shall I call you master? Master?]

"... No. Don't."

Since he called me master with an old man's voice, it's kind of...

you know.

Besides, I felt a certain freakish degree of cuteness in his voice, so I was even more disgusted.

Why is he mixing a nasally voice with a baritone voice?

[Yes. I won't do that.]

The mood became awkward.

I briefly turned my attention away from the holy sword and talked to Seregia, who was within the soul sword.

"Lady Seregia."

[Yes.]

"Would you like to try saying master once?"

[I don't want to.]

Seregia instantly returned to her old manner of speaking and spoke coldly.



# Chapter 162 - Tutorial 27th Floor (1)

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[So you got that as a reward? Wow. Gods are also shameless. Shouldn't you get a different reward in exchange for being entrusted with the holy sword?]

[That's what I'm saying.]

[So how long have you had that holy sword?]

[TL Note: I assume he's talking to the girl who's currently going through Hell Difficulty.]

[Rather than that, wouldn't it be better to slash downwards more heavily?]

"Maybe. If I consider the next motion, I think it'd be better to swing lightly."

Seregia acknowledged my opinion.

Therefore, our three opinions were divided 2:1.

However, the holy sword wouldn't accept it.

[Just slash downwards with all your might. Everything will be taken care of if I use my Barrier Magic. Summoning a Fire Wall or a Wind Wall to block their approach works too. If not, then even if you just shoot a lightweight magic like Magic Missile, you'll be able to block the enemies that are trying to aim for your weak spot. Of course, you have to wield a magic sword that can do that first. Hoo hoo. However, where would you find another magic sword as great as me in the world? Haha.]

He really is a natural at getting caught up in his own boasting.

I got irritated every time I heard the holy sword bragging.

This guy would boast all the time.

He's at the level of a narcissist.

[Warrior, you've been extremely lucky. There's not another

sword like me in this world. Hahaha.]

I can't snap at him in times like this.

I realized that in the past few days.

If I say something, the holy sword wouldn't accept it and we'd start arguing.

And that argument would usually be sprinkled with the holy sword's boasts.

If I didn't want to hear that, the answer was to just ignore him.

So I just stayed silent.

Seregia stayed silent for the same reason.

[... Huh?]

Nobody responded, so when I heard the holy sword's flustered voice, I felt a little more cheerful.

I stood up.

"I think I've rested enough, so shall we go?"

[Yes. I believe three days' rest was enough. Let's depart.]

After Seregia calmly spoke, the holy sword, whose humility had reached its limit, spoke.

[At last, this is the start of a new journey. Warrior! Adventure! Friendship! Love! Justice! New bonds in a new world! And those new bonds will create a new legend of the holy sword! Ah... these are words from my early childhood, travelling here and there on the continent was my hobby.]

Damn it.

I want to sew his mouth shut and throw it away.

Ah, that guy doesn't have a mouth, does he?

I want to infuse the Thousand Arms sheath with a Silence Magic.

In truth, I had checked the store to see if there was anything like

that.

If the holy sword didn't have a Dispel Magic function, I definitely would've bought it.

I ignored the holy sword that refused to stop boasting and stood atop the portal.

I passed a bonfire room and was transported to the stage.

I explained to Seregia and the holy sword that I travelled between dimensions and that like the mercenaries who worked as Warriors, I would travel to this or that world, and my job was to accomplish a specific goal.

Because of that, the title of Warrior was quickly discarded.

Also, I told Seregia to use my name and speak informally.

In truth, it didn't matter if they disregarded my title, but since Seregia personally insisted that she was more comfortable with the title, we just decided to keep it as is.

The holy sword had also told me to call it by its name Ahoubuch, or whatever, but it was hard to pronounce so I just decided to call it the holy sword.

The holy sword was disappointed as expected, but I ignored him.

Other than that, Seregia and the holy sword couldn't perceive the portal, the waiting room, or the Tutorial at all.

They could only understand to the extent that they were a means of transportation and safe lodging.

It was unfortunate, but since they can't even perceive it, I did not pity them as much.

[Welcome to the 27th floor stage.]

There was a village built in front of a large cave on the 27th floor.

No, I should call it a town instead.

There was a fairly large number of people walking around and I

also saw a lot of buildings compacted together.

But from just a glimpse, it was a town so squalid that it seemed to be more of a village for natives of a jungle.

[Warrior, what is your objective here?] Seregia asked.

The holy sword maintained his silence.

The holy sword had to be alert when he went outside, so I told him to talk as little as possible.

Maybe it's because I stressed it several times, but the holy sword was silent just as he promised.

Honestly, it was because of this that in this round I canceled my plan to rest and hurried into the stage instead.

I don't know how long the holy sword will be silent and keep his promise, but it was a relief he was well-behaved, even if it was for only a short while.

"I'm not sure. Let's wait for a little bit."

I couldn't immediately respond to Seregia's question, since I don't know yet.

I briefly stood at the center of the town and waited.

[The 27th floor's challenge is starting.]

Explanation: To the east of Gravia, there are two trade routes to the western continent. The first route is the sea route, crossing the sea between the continents, and the second is via the enormous subterranean cave beneath the ocean. This subterranean cave that is well-known as Gravia's underground dungeon, is made up of three stairways. Also, there is an existence that is occupying the lowest floor alone. In the lowest floor of Gravia's underground dungeon, please vanquish the ruler of the lowest floor and seize the earthworm's treasure.

You will need a special guide in order to reach the lowest floor of Gravia's dungeon.

Please enter the building made of red bricks and obtain a guide.

[Clear conditions]

1. Defeat the earthworm.
2. Acquire the earthworm's treasure.

It was a fairly comprehensible stage.

So I attack the underground dungeon and defeat the boss mob.

Plus, I also have to acquire the boss mob's loot.

The clear condition concerning the existence of the earthworm caught my attention more than the stage's concept.

An earthworm, huh.

But “an earthworm” normally refers to an actual worm.

However, if it were just the average earthworm, there would be no way it would have a treasure worthy of being the stage's clear condition.

In any case, isn't it a dragon?

[TL Note: The previous section is the author's wordplay. The Korean word for “earthworm” can be taken apart and literally translated to mean “earth (dust) dragon,” though it is not usually used this way. This is Ho Jae's perception of the term, not what the clear condition actually says.]

Didn't it say that it was on the lowest floor of the underground dungeon?

Didn't it say that it's occupying the lowest floor alone?

Perhaps exactly as its written, it's a dragon living underground?

I was a little excited.

Seregia and the holy sword had also learned of the clear condition through the message.

[I'm looking forward to it. If possible, I hope that there will be a

lot of enemies on the path leading to the lowest floor.]

[To defeat a wicked evil dragon...]

Seregia also showed her anticipation.

In the holy sword's case, it was excited about something and started talking, but when I gripped the hilt, it immediately stopped talking.

[Um... Warrior.]

The holy sword that had been briefly silent spoke furtively.

"What?"

[Can't I just speak casually with you as well? I won't be too noisy.]

"You can't. I don't trust you."

[You're too much. Isn't this favoritism?]

It is favoritism.

"If you don't like it, then you can go back into the inventory."

[Yes. I'll remain quiet. I love you, Warrior. You know that I always respect you, right?]

What are you talking about?

After we finished our conversation, I walked towards the red building.

I didn't walk that far before I reached the front of the buildings made of red bricks.

It should be sufficient to simply pick a guide from here and travel to the dungeon.

Kiri Kiri had advised me to pick my guide carefully.

However, what did she mean by 'pick carefully'?

I have no idea.

I confidently shoved the door open and entered without much

thought.

The scenery inside the building was typical.

An adventurer's guild inside of a game would look exactly like this.

They were selling alcohol and plain food and the people sitting at the tables all looked like vagrants.

There was a large wooden block situated in the middle of the building's interior, pinned with information notices and advertisements regarding this and that.

[It's a noisy place.] Seregia commented.

It was actually really noisy inside the building.

[It also reeks.]

After she said that, the holy sword beside me commented as well.

I have no idea how the holy sword could smell it when he didn't have a nose, but this place honestly reeked of a disgusting smell.

I briefly looked around the building and found a person who looked to be the front-desk clerk or a worker.

She was a fairly old-looking middle-aged woman.

She was sitting at the counter and either telling people about this and that or diligently writing something down on paper.

No matter how I look at it, she didn't act like a customer at all.

If I were to point out a peculiar point, it was just that she had a red eye tattooed on her forehead.

I approached the middle-aged woman at the counter and asked outright.

"I'm looking for a guide that can guide me through the dungeon."

"You're that dual-wielding swordsman that I saw talking to himself over there."

"I'm sorry?"

"It's nothing. You said you were looking for a guide?"

It seems like she had seen me talking to my swords outside the building a little while ago.

Then again, it must've looked a little strange.

If you just look at me, I carried around two conspicuous swords and I had stood in the middle of the street muttering to myself.

"What is your destination?"

"The lowest floor."

"Are you by chance looking for a spot to kill yourself?"

"No."

Her voice that abruptly asked whether I was going to kill myself was sad, but I calmly responded.

"I'm visiting."

Immediately after I had told her that I wanted to go to the lowest floor, the woman began furrowing her eyebrows right in front of me.

If I had told her that I was going to kill the dragon, it seemed like she would call it a bluff and chase me out of the building.

"As you may know, even if we can guide you there, we cannot guarantee your safety. That is..."

"I don't need it."

When I bluntly told her that, the woman retained her crumpled face and pondered for a long while.

Then she pointed to a corner of the building and said, "Ask that child over there. That child's probably the only one who will guide you."

I saw a kid that didn't even look ten in the corner that she



pointed at.

"Are there no other guides?"

"I'm not sure. That child's probably the only guide who needs to make money today or else he'll die tomorrow."

I had no choice but to accept this guide considering the circumstances.

I roughly said my goodbyes and I approached the child squatting in the corner.

Right when I was about to introduce myself and raise the child up, the child abruptly stood up.

"Hello, Swordsman. Did you say you were going all the way down to the lowest floor? Woah, you're an amazing person. You're manly, you've got courage, and moreover, you have a couple of swords. You don't have to worry too much about the lowest floor. Especially since the scary rumors regarding the lowest floor were made up by all sorts of people. But for a swordsman like you who's the real deal, it won't be a very dangerous place for you. Haha."

Perhaps he was listening to my conversation with the middle-aged woman, but the child already knew about my destination.

Because of that, it seemed like I wouldn't have to separately explain it to him.

Strangely, the child had a red eye tattooed on his forehead just like the middle-aged woman.

[In his first meeting with you he's smoothly flattering you; he's an unusually rude little kid.]

The holy sword muttered.

Look who's talking.

[Rather than flattery, I also hear it as sarcasm.]

It was just as Seregia said.

That's how I heard it.

This little kid wasn't sincerely being sarcastic with me.

That's just how I heard it.

Since I heard the kid's words that way, it seems like his expression was hugely affected.

His thin voice that hadn't yet gone through puberty was also probably disturbed as well.

This young dirty kid revealed his white teeth and was smiling brightly.

However, his smile only formed on the sides of his mouth.

He bowed his forehead slightly and the eyes that looked up at me weren't smiling at all.

He was repeatedly rotating between observing my facial expression, my clothes, and my weapons.

Seeing as how he's repeatedly looking at the places he's observed before, I could tell that the child's mental state was extremely anxious.

[He's a child without much attentiveness. His focus is also terrible.]

Seregia criticized.

I agreed with everything she said.

[If he wielded a sword, he'd die outside of his home within a month.]

This time, the holy sword commented.

It was a little uncertain, but I agreed.

The child seemed to be an existence that exhibited all the habits or peculiarities that you can't have as a swordsman or a warrior.

His intentions are written all over his face.

His attentiveness and his focus are lacking, and he wasn't even sure of what he had seen himself.

He looked around carefully for other people's gazes, but he turned his eyes towards too many things, and he couldn't identify what was most important.

For example, my eyes that are looking straight down at the kid.

His breathing was so erratic that he may as well have had tuberculosis, and his standing posture was terrible.

Even if you look at his build from the outside, it's terrible; the space between his legs when he steps is erratic.

No, the angle that his feet are touching the ground is strange.

There may be some kind of problem with his feet.

[Warrior. I maintained my ego for a considerably long time, but this is my first time seeing such an untalented human in the world.]

The holy sword didn't drop its criticism.

This kid isn't even a swordsman, so why do his talents matter?

It's fine as long as he guides me well.

[Yes. He really does have the worst ability. Even in the academy where numerous students gather, there wasn't anyone that bad. He's still young and he doesn't seem to have been given any particular education nor has he been trained. Even if we consider his malnourished and unhealthy state, it's really hard to find a human like that. He's a dunce sent by heaven.]

Seregia supplemented.

The holy sword's and Seregia's criticism combination was too cruel that even I, the one listening, felt sorry for the kid.

"Swordsman? Is there any problem...?"

"No, there's none. Then, can you give me an explanation

regarding the dungeon? I need to test whether you have enough knowledge as a guide."

"Yes. First, please sit over there. I'll explain after you sit down."

I had thought of this before, but it came up again.

Kiri Kiri had advised that I need to pick my guide well.

I don't really understand the meaning behind that.

The only option I had was this kid.

## Chapter 163 - Tutorial 27th Floor (2)

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The kid continued his explanation for a while.

It seemed like I wouldn't have to be dubious of his knowledge of the dungeon.

But I still couldn't believe him.

This kid said it'd be best if I stayed in this building's quarters on the 2nd floor and departed tomorrow morning.

It was a good plan.

In various ways.

"Fine, let's do it like that. Here, give me your hand."

I took out a subspace bag from my inventory and the kid obediently stuck out his hand as I instructed.

I pulled out a few gems that I had prepared in advance from the subspace bag.

"Here, this should be enough for a down payment. Exchange it for money as you wish."

I placed the gems into the kid's dirty palms.

It seemed like the kid was in disbelief at the gems that had been placed in his hand; his mouth gaped wide open and remained still.

"Like you said, I'll stay in this inn today, and we'll depart tomorrow. Come pick me up here tomorrow morning."

After I finished speaking, I left the stunned kid and the corner; I went towards the counter with the middle-aged woman.

"A room?" the woman immediately asked as I approached.

"Yes. You have good hearing."

It wasn't easy to listen to my conversation with the kid in the corner inside of this noisy building.

What's worse, she shouldn't have been able to see us as we were cleverly hidden behind a column.

"What do you mean, good hearing. I just guessed. The dungeon's also quite far, so rather than departing at such an ambiguous time, it'd probably be better to depart in the morning. If you were going to depart immediately, you wouldn't have left that child over there and came here by yourself."

Now that you mention it, you have a point.

She definitely could've guessed that I was going to ask for a room. However, I was certain.

This middle-aged lady could hear my conversation with the kid.

Since that kid had also heard the conversation between the middle-aged lady and I.

"Then you're even more amazing."

As I said that, I placed a single gem on the counter.

"This should be enough, right? I don't need the change."

"It's enough."

The middle-aged lady hurriedly grabbed the gem, hiding it in her bosom, and said, "How about being a bit more careful, especially if you don't want to be robbed in the middle of the night?"

She's an amusing old lady.

The old lady should also be well aware that I'm not concerned about things like that.

Even if I hadn't taken out the gem, I knew.

Compared to the people around me with their disheveled appearances, I wore clean, trimmed clothing and I had two expensive-looking sword hilts strapped to my waist.

Also, the woman should be well aware that I don't mind attracting the attention of other people.

However, I wonder why she's pretending like she doesn't know.

This old lady, after I had entered this building and started conversing with her, has been maintaining a consistent attitude.

Whether I'm thinking about my own power or this woman's ability to gauge my level of strength, it's not the right attitude for her to take.

"Auntie, do you have any interest in being a guide? I think you'd do well."

"Not everyone can be a guide."

After she was finished, she shut her mouth.

However, I didn't stand up and stared closely at her.

The old lady showed a variety of expressions after that for a short time.

After she had cycled through several emotions on her face, the final emotion she revealed was hostility.

It was a vivid, clear killing intent to the point that I could feel it.

When I didn't react at all to her hostility, the woman quickly dispersed her energy.

And muttered.

"I have no intentions of going on a trip with a monster whose intentions I don't know."

That was an interesting statement.

"Your room's on the 2nd floor. Your room number is written on this key here. Go up."

After she said that, the old lady left the counter and went outside the building.

Rather than following her, I decided to go up to the building's 2nd floor.

I found the room number that was written on the key and as I entered the room, I thought.

She had no intentions of going on a trip with a monster.

If she had regarded me as that dangerous of a person, I had to rethink what she had said.

Her warning about the lowest floor... Did she say that it's dangerous despite taking a peek at my strength?

If that's not it, was that also just an act?

I ought to reassess the kid.

The assessment that the kid needed to work if he didn't want to die immediately tomorrow.

Did that old lady think that that kid would go down to the lowest floor despite the risk of death, or if not, did she think that the kid would die because he was going with me?

It could be both.

I entered the room and roughly tossed the subspace bag atop the bed.

Shall I meditate until tomorrow morning?

[Warrior.] Seregia said.

"What?"

[I believe that there's a high possibility that the young child from before won't return in the morning. I cannot be sure, but that's what I think.]

"That's also what I think."

He'd probably disappear somewhere with the down payment of gems.

If the lowest floor is that dangerous, and he didn't want to work together with a dangerous person who carelessly takes out gems in this squalid place...



[Then why did you give that child...]

"In the event he doesn't come, I just need to find a different guide."

[Didn't you hear that that child's the only guide available?]

"No. She just said that that kid's the only one willing to guide me on such a dangerous path."

There are definitely at least two guides.

Kiri Kiri told me that I had to pick my guide well.

Plus, the young guide also had a strange tattoo engraved onto his forehead.

That meant that I could easily make an inference.

What I needed to worry about right now is the woman who had recommended the boy, who had ran away with my gems.

How do I use this excuse to convince her?

The fact that she's excessively hostile towards me will be a variable.

If convincing her isn't possible, I think I'd need to threaten her.

[I think differently, Warrior. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo.]

While I was in the midst of organizing my thoughts, the holy sword cut in.

"If you're going to talk gibberish again, I'll put you into the inventory immediately."

[No, it's not that. It's not that, Warrior. Please trust me! When have I ever spoken nonsense for you to say that! Please trust me!]

How can I trust you?

[I'm telling you this because neither the great and courageous Warrior nor the cute and shy Miss Seregia seem to have encountered a lot of people. If you don't have experience in cases

like this, it's something you wouldn't know well.]

[...Ugh.]

Seregia groaned at his flattery of our cute such and such.

I really should put him into my inventory after all.

I opened my inventory and was about to put it in when the holy sword hurriedly yelled.

[That child will return tomorrow!]

"What did you say?"

The holy sword hadn't given up, yelling something, and once I put the holy sword into my inventory, I started to meditate.

Only one ego sword had disappeared, but I started to take in the silent and calm mood of the room.

[I think like I can live now.]

I agreed with Seregia's half-muttered sigh.

"Good morning, Warrior. Then, shall we immediately go to the dungeon?"

[See that. I was right, wasn't I?]

[...]

Seregia and I couldn't refute the annoying holy sword's statement.

Because the kid had appeared with a much cleaner appearance than yesterday.

Perhaps the kid washed his hair this morning, since it was clean and tidy; even his clothes looked much better than yesterday.

His clothes were clean, but they weren't new.

He had exchanged the gems that I had given him into currency and rather than buy new clothes, it seemed like he had come wearing his best clothes.

Plus, he was wearing a large backpack on his back.

It looked bloated even from the outside and I was certain that it was packed full of miscellaneous items.

"Yeah, let's go. Take me there."

I didn't refuse and just told him to go.

I could tell why the child had turned up even without the holy sword explaining the reason.

Amongst the kid's various flaws, his most fatal flaw was that he would diligently observe someone, but he wouldn't realize that the very person was also observing him.

The next fatal flaw was that his gaze and his expression were like an open book.

I had heard these words before.

A person's greed knows no end, and they would repeat their mistakes.

Where did I hear this again?

That's not what's important.

What's important right now is that this kid is repeating his many mistakes excessively.

I nonchalantly slung my subspace bag over my shoulder which contained my bed and left my room.

Based on the movements of my bag, the kid...

The kid's eyes were following the movements of my bag and it was only after I got right in front of him that his rapidly-moving eyes paused.

"Yes. I'll take you there."

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. What did I tell you?]

I just silently listened to the holy sword's annoying

condescension.

Now I could read the bare greed within this dirty kid's eyes, though I ignored the dissatisfaction I saw.

Even after I had gone home and thought about it calmly, I couldn't fathom a desperation worth gambling his life on.

It's been a while since my abilities were lacking.

Also, this was the type of ability I cannot be lacking in.

Though I'm clumsy when it comes to situations regarding tact, I was confident when it came to reading my opponent's intent.

When I was a pro gamer, I remember saying that I didn't know what the difference was between my two team members.

I don't know why it is that I can so easily grasp an enemy's intent, yet I don't even have the slightest idea of what other people usually want.

However, I definitely felt something different.

Also, I had failed to discern the kid's intent yesterday.

Even though it was such a clearly-exposed intent.

Was it because I took this kid too lightly due to his lacking strength, or if not, would it be because of a different reason?

It was troublesome work.

Because of that reason, I didn't obstinately plug the holy sword's mouth and left the town.

And we approached the cave's entrance, no, the dungeon's entrance...

They say that the dungeon that looks relatively close by is actually much farther than your eyes can see.

It would take around six hours to get there, walking.

When I was in the town, it didn't feel like it would take that long,

but after I left the town and starting walking through the woods, I could definitely feel it.

The dungeon looked as if it were right in front of you, yet the true distance hardly lessened.

The path between the dungeon and the town was tranquil.

There would occasionally be some adventurers or merchants who passed by and I matched the kid's slow strides, but in no time I had walked far ahead of him.

The kid's gait was on the slower side.

Even if you consider his still short legs, he was still slow.

And it was tough for the kid to even walk this slowly.

Pant. Pant.

If you listened to him, you wouldn't be able to call it pathetic; it was to the point that even I, who was walking beside him pited his breathing.

"Let's rest here for a little bit."

"Yes... Thank you."

I helped the kid lower his backpack and we leaned our backs against a wooden column.

I also dropped my subspace backpack from my shoulder and put it on my lap.

We were sitting under a tree like this, which reminded me of Myong Myong again.

Is he living well?

It made me uncomfortable that even in this peaceful memory, several things weighed on my mind.

Indeed, what kind of condition would mean 'living well'?

And whatever the condition, can I say that Myong Myong is

living well?

Is the Myong Myong I'm even talking about that Myong Myong?

What's the difference between that Myong Myong and the other Myong Myongs.

Let's say that all the Myong Myongs found their happy ending. Does that mean they're living well?

Kiri Kiri had, in a roundabout way, referred to the tutorial and challengers as places that aren't Earth.

There should definitely be some challengers who reached the 19th floor besides me.

These civilizations that exist in the cosmos and the tutorial that possibly exists within them.

Also, in the face of all those possibilities, there is a possibility that Myong Myong isn't unhappy.

The more I recollect it, the more sad I get.

When I was together with Myong Myong, if I hadn't deliberately tried to ignore this fact, would I be able to laugh together with Myong Myong?

If I had left Myong Myong in front of the closed-off town's gate; what kind of choice would I have made?

It was suffocating.

It was the exact same back then.

Still, the reason I hadn't completely ignored it was because Idy had suggested a path that would enable me to resolve this suffocating feeling.

I brought my unproductive thoughts to a close and focused on the here and now.

After I had organized my thoughts, I asked the two ego's swords' opinions.

What do you think?

Rather than using my voice to speak like usual, I transmitted my intent through voice transmission.

Seregia and the holy sword both agreed with my opinion.

[I agree.]

[I also agree, Warrior. For things like this, you need to tidy things up beforehand so that there's no trouble down the road.]

I confirmed their opinions.

I'll confirm it one more time and then take care of it.

I took out some bread and water from my subspace bag and passed it to the kid.

"Eat it while you rest."

The kid saw the objects protruding out of the subspace bag and was astonished.

"This is that magic bag, right?" the child asked excitedly, and the sound of his breathing had quickly calmed down.

"That's right."

To be exact, it was a subspace bag, but well, I guess it's the same thing as a magic bag.

"Do you have other items in there besides food?"

I decided to answer the kid's excited questions and say it like it was.

"Of course. I also took out and gave you the gems from here yesterday."

The kid was in awe, saying 'woah', and I waited briefly for the kid to eat his bread.

When the kid started eating the bread, I took out a short sword from my bag.

"It also has weapons!"

"Of course. It contains various weapons."

In truth, this short sword was the only weapon inside the bag.

It was the gladius that I had bought after clearing the 4th floor.

According to the holy sword's logic, which was strapped to my waist, the gladius was a treasure that could be called a holy sword thanks to the god's blessing it had received.

It wasn't fancy and it was actually rather plain, but possessed a high quality aura on the outside.

I raised that short sword and threw it towards a tree that was a bit far away.

Just as I had intended, the short sword lodged into the center of the tree trunk.

And I concentrated, moving my mana.

Due to my mana, the short sword pulled out of the tree column, flying into the air before returning to my hand.

Beside me, the kid was exclaiming.

"Is it a magic sword!?"

"Yeah. It's a magic sword."

To be honest, I had just idiotically pulled out the faraway short sword with my mana.

It wasn't as if I had used mana's special characteristic or displayed its absorbent power.

I had just used my mana to embed the short sword in the tree trunk, pull it out, and raise it up before it flew to the front of my hand.

Even compared to normal people, this kid's magic circuits were tightly blocked and he wouldn't be able to notice what I had done.



I threw my short sword again, towards the tree column.

And using my mana again, I brought the short sword back to my hand.

As he saw my acrobatics, the kid who had been exclaiming with all he had bashfully asked.

Upon his red flushed face, his eyes gleamed, and his fingertips were slightly shaking.

"May I also try once?"

Sure, of course you can.

# Chapter 164 - Tutorial 27th Floor (3)

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I offered the short sword to the kid.

The kid's hand reached out towards the short sword's handle.

With an unusually quick speed.

Sharply.

It didn't look like the movements of a kid who was weak and couldn't even walk right.

Even so, it was still the movements of a little kid.

With this, I think I've given him several chances.

If it were possible, I'd like to roughly turn him in.

Still, isn't this too much of a dead end?

[I don't know what you mean by a 'dead end', but I also think that way. Warrior.]

The holy sword chattered.

Why would you agree on something when you don't know what it is?

It doesn't matter.

Whether the holy sword agrees with my opinion or not, won't affect my decision.

When the kid's hand touched the short sword's hilt, he touched the edges with his fingers, and rotated it.

As I saw the embarrassed kid's expression, the reverse grip short sword stabbed into his chest.

"AH!"

[TL Note: Changed Korean groaning/moaning sounds. They make no sense in English because they're sounds made in Korean.]

After he cried out briefly, he fell flat on his face.

He didn't die.

No matter how bad his motor skills are, it wasn't to the point that he would mishandle the short sword.

"Hey, kid."

"Ugh... ah..."

The kid couldn't respond to my words and just groaned in agony.

"Hey, kid. Say something."

[I would just kill him discreetly, and find a new guide.]

The holy sword chattered again.

I wonder what kind of ego this guy has to call himself a holy sword?

"Hey, kid, you'll die from excessive bleeding like that. Say something."

The kid couldn't respond.

It seemed like the kid couldn't think out of fear and confusion, rather than the pain.

He wasn't in the kind of condition where I could bully him into speaking.

"Don't worry so much. You won't immediately die from getting stabbed. You see, I haven't just been stabbed only once or twice."

It hadn't reached his inner organs and blood wasn't gushing out of the wound.

Of course, if the bleeding continued on like this, he would die from the bleeding. And there had been the possibility that he would've died from shock when he first stabbed his chest with the short sword.

I took out a potion bottle from my subspace bag, dangling it from my hand.

It wasn't an elixir, but it would be able to heal that kind of injury with ease.

"Here, I even have a potion. You don't have to be concerned about dying."

The kid's look changed.

That's probably the look of a traveler in the desert when they discover an oasis.

When this kid had seen my short sword, when he had seen my subspace bag, when he had seen my gems, when he had first seen my clothes, and when he saw the swords at my waist, he had shown the same expression throughout.

I have no intention of blaming this kid.

I could understand him, and I could even sympathize with him.

I just have to tell him.

I slapped the kid's outstretched hand away with my hand holding the potion bottle before swinging back my hand holding the potion bottle.

The bottle shattered against the kid's head with a loud kish!, splashing the potion onto him.

In the midst of the sharply breaking glass shards, the kid briefly clutched his head and groaned.

Then, he soon realized that the pain coming from his head wasn't important.

The kid tried to gather the scattered potion on the earthen floor into his hands, but the thin potion instantly soaked into the ground.

For the first time, the kid's eyes bore at mine.

Finally.

It was a gaze of extreme desperation and confusion.

Only when he was in this position did he look into my eyes for the first time.

Because it seemed like he had only looked into my eyes for the first time due to the position he was in, it felt a little pitiful.

I took out another potion from my subspace bag.

The kid attempted to reflexively raise his body, but when I moved my hand and gripped the potion upside down, his body waned.

And he begged.

"Please... Please. Please give me the potion... I'll do whatever you ask. Please, I beg of you."

As I looked at the kid begging with watery eyes and a runny nose, I realized that he wasn't that dumb.

If you sink into a state of panic in this kind of a situation, your head doesn't work; people who repeatedly make stupid decisions are not uncommon.

However, the kid read my reaction and quickly realized that he was powerless.

"You don't need to do anything."

The child's eyes became more and more haggard.

"I only want one thing from you."

I decided to only go this far for now.

If we waste more time, this feeble kid might just die on the ground.

"Here, I'll just give you the potion."

And I put the potion bottle into the kid's hand.

The kid hesitated momentarily before he removed the lid of the bottle and started drinking the potion.

Since his hands were shaking so much, most of the potion dripped down his chin.

I had to take out another potion.

I fed him the potion myself because he couldn't properly drink the potion. I even separately rubbed some onto the surface of his wounds.

[TL Note: It doesn't specify what Ho Jae rubbed onto his wounds, but it's assumed to be either the potion or a separate ointment/medicine.]

It took about 15 minutes for the kid to calm down.

He was still in light shock, but he had stabilized enough for him to listen to me talk.

Fear over gratitude.

You shouldn't have been so greedy, kid.

"Here, take it."

I threw the subspace bag onto his chest.

And I said to the quizzical child.

"Now I'll add this to my down payment of gems. I'll give you this bag."

"I'm sorry?"

"And if my work ends well, I'll add the short sword to that, and I'll give you more gems too."

It seemed like the kid didn't understand the situation very well, because he gazed at me with a vacant expression.

I asked the kid.

"Now, let's go back to the previous conversation. I said that I only wanted one thing from you, right? What do you think that one thing is?"

Even while he was flustered, he quickly found the right answer.

"G-Guiding you to the lowest floor."

"That's right."

I grabbed the back of the kid's neck and propped him up.

I hit his back hard enough to make a clapping sound, and said.

"Then let's go. Towards the dungeon's lowest floor."

I followed behind the kid who clambered on his feet, holding the subspace bag at his chest.

The kid was soon able to walk without much problem.

He had a hole in his shirt, but he was actually walking faster than before.

It was to the point where it would be quite an unmanageable speed for a normal person.

I satisfyingly followed behind the kid as I sorted out the characteristics of those guys called "guides."

Firstly, they have acute senses.

I'm sure that they have more sensitive hearing and eyesight than normal humans.

Even among their senses, their hearing is really outstanding.

They don't simply hear the smallest sounds; even when it's noisy, they can precisely discern what they're looking for.

To add to that, their leg and arm muscles are superb.

With that kid's poor amount of muscle, he wouldn't ever be able to display such speed or endurance.

That was one of the reasons that the kid planned to attack me.

If he acted like a lanky kid and suddenly attacked in a burst of speed, most people wouldn't be able to deal with it.

If it was a normal human, you would think that they would have

mana to make up for their lack of muscular strength, but that kid was different.

That kid has no connection to mana.

It just looked like a problem with his blood.

I thought that he may be a different species similar to humans.

Next, the guides are good at acting.

It's not just at the level of spewing a few good lies, but they would be able to create a separate persona for their employer.

It could be a common point that was linked to either blood or a tribal tradition, or it could also be nothing more than a professional characteristic.

Lastly, if we're also talking about that kid's characteristics, it'd just be that he's really talentless.

If you had a body that was blessed with those muscles, it'd be really hard to be talentless.

It's still the same regardless of how little he eats or how lanky he is, or even if you consider that he hasn't received any training or education.

This should be enough, right?

Assuming that the kid will deliver me to the lowest floor well, his guidance would be useless information after.

There really isn't any reason to delve more deeply into my thoughts here.

[Warrior.] Seregia said.

She must be asking for the reason.

[Could you please explain?]

Seregia interrogated me regarding my previous behavior.

She doesn't want to affect my decision, but she wants me to



justify my past behavior.

[Let's summarize that kid's two problems.]

[Though it's not just one or two problems.]

[Still, there are two things that are problematic. First is his greed. Everyone has greed. And you can be swung around by your own greed here and there. It's just that that kid was excessively greedy. When he had received the gems, that kid, rather than being satisfied with them, wanted more. The reason that this could become an issue is that I don't know where his greed ends.]

One might say that the kid's payment was overboard, but even so, the kid's greed hadn't been sated.

If I could guess where his greed would end, I would have solved the matter by just giving him the treasure that he wanted.

Inside this tutorial, whether it be gems or anything else, all the items I possess are just points.

Also, I had no intention of treasuring those gems that were nothing more than points.

If it allowed me to clear a stage easily, I would give that kid enough gems to buy the entire town that we had passed.

However, even after receiving that many gems, I wasn't sure that the kid would be satisfied.

[That's why I gave them to him so easily. I also gave him the subspace bag that drew his attention, and even added more gems and the magic short sword on top of that.]

[However, that wouldn't solve the problem. Even after receiving those, you don't know if that child would want even more.]

[That's why I gave them to him so easily. Whether it be gems or magical tools, I needed to show him that all of those held no meaning to me. I don't know how much time I'll spend with that kid in the future, but I'll imply it.]

[What are you talking about?]

[That if he asks me directly, I can give him as much as he wants.]

Seregia was momentarily silent.

Seregia assented with my reasoning and I walked through the forest, listening to the birds call.

After a little time passed like that, Seregia spoke.

[That must be your solution to the second problem.]

[Yeah. The kid's second problem was that he was going to attack me in order to satiate his greed. That's why I let him know. That there was a better method.]

[However, Warrior. I think that there are still two problems remaining.]

Two problems, you say.

Rather than pondering, I just asked Seregia.

[First, it's if the child's greed still isn't fulfilled until the end.]

[That's why I used a slightly violent method. I want to give him the impression that I can give him as much as he wants, but he could die if he makes the wrong choice.]

[Yes. The child will attempt to walk on a tightrope. However, the idea that that child will be moved by his greed until the end still remains.]

I don't think so.

Fear will overshadow his greed.

Fear would stimulate a human's most basic desire: the will to live.

The faint Seregia probably won't be able to understand that.

At least right now, the kid that's walking in front of me isn't guiding me to satisfy his greed.

He's just doing as he's told because he's scared.

For the time being, I should be able to control him with fear.

And as time passes, when that fear fades, I can inversely take advantage of the kid's greed.

Finally, that fear would fade, but would still remain; that fear will curb that kid's excessive greed.

[What about the second problem?]

[There's a possibility that this kid may bear a grudge because of this.]

I followed the kid's lead and arrived at the dungeon; the dungeon's entrance looked a bit different than what I had expected.

I had expected the cave entrance to be dreary and ominous, but this was just a marketplace.

I wasn't saying that it was as noisy as a marketplace, but that it was a literal marketplace.

There were stalls here and there, surrounded by people soliciting those passing by.

Whether it was the surroundings of the dungeon's entrance, or a passage beyond the entrance, it was all the same.

It was noisy and boisterous and there were too many people.

There were seriously too many people.

I grabbed the wrist of a man who bumped into my shoulder before trying to pass by.

And I gripped it and twisted it.

Crunch.

They either tried to rummage through my pockets or tried to steal the swords at my waist; the number of pickpockets who had their wrists and elbows shattered already numbered over ten.

The pickpocket's agonized scream had been buried by the bustling market; the collapsed, screaming pickpocket was drowned in the crowd and left my sight.

"Is this place normally like this?"

"Yes, Swordsman. It's always like this because there's only one entrance. If you go inside, it'll be a bit better. Until then, be careful of pickpockets."

Hey kid, there already aren't any pickpockets remaining that can continue their business in my vicinity.

# Chapter 165 - Tutorial 27th Floor (4)

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When we reached the passageway leading to the middle floor past the upper floor of the dungeon, I was finally able to get away from the chaos.

The people using the intercontinental underground passageway, the adventurers who look for medicinal herbs or monster corpses, and mercenaries generally only use the upper floor.

Because of that, it's only been two days since we've entered the dungeon and today, we enjoyed silence and were able to walk casually.

"How long will it take until we reach the middle floor?"

"It'll take around three days."

That's long.

It's just the passageway between the upper floor and the middle floor, yet it'll take three days?

"Be that as it may, it'll take too long."

"That's because it's not just a simple passageway. It's not a literal title; rather than calling this place a passageway, you can call this the upper-middle floor."

The upper-middle floor, you say.

When the kid described the dungeon beforehand, I hadn't heard anything regarding the upper-middle floor.

Now that I think about it, he didn't explain the middle floor either.

When I think back, now that I've entered the dungeon, the information that the kid gave back then didn't have any worthwhile information.

"What's in the upper-middle floor?"

"Rather than an intercontinental passageway, the upper-middle floor is generally used as a refuge. There are a few refugee towns composed of criminals and cursed people."

It's as big as a town...?

"It seems like it's a lot bigger than I thought."

"Yes. It's actually larger than the upper floor. However, since we're going to use a crossroad that leads directly to the middle floor, we should be able to pass through it in three days."

Contrary to his explanation in the town, it was fairly informational.

I didn't know how precise and substantial the contents of his explanation were.

"Toll."

I saw the thieves occupying the crossroads and asking for money as if it were obvious and briefly pondered.

Should I just give them the money and pass through?

[It's been a while, so what do you think about tidying them up, Warrior?]

Just shut up a bit, you psychopathic demon sword.

I looked at the kid, but he just looked back at me as if paying the toll was expected.

And it didn't seem like he had any intention of paying the toll with the down payment I gave him yesterday.

[Warrior, we don't have any change right now. We have to pay with the gems, but if they accept those gems, they won't let us go; rather, they'll try to extort us even further.]

They probably would.

But you never know, so I decided to pay the toll fee.

If there are any surveillance crystals stuck somewhere, things

will become troublesome.

This is the cave passageway.

If this lively bunch in the surrounding area become my enemies, they could even tear down the passage and bury us.

I took out a gem from my inventory and threw it to him.

"This should be enough, right?"

The thief boss, who had received the gem, briefly pondered, and asked, "May I ask you where your destination is?"

Seregia's prediction was wrong.

He spoke much more submissively than I expected.

"The middle floor," the child beside me said abruptly.

The man glanced at the boy and said, "So, you were a guide, huh."

"Yes."

The man turned his head towards me again, and asked, "You have no business in the upper-middle floor?"

"No. We're planning on going straight down to the middle floor," the kid said again.

"Then may we guide you?"

"Yes. Of course."

The kid accepted their leader's request.

I didn't know anyone here, so I decided to stay quiet.

After the kid exchanged a few more words with the thieves, we started to move again.

One thief was added to our party of the kid and me, so we moved as three.

"Explain to me what happened back there," I asked the kid, after around thirty minutes of walking.

The kid glanced back at the thief following behind to see if he was watching, and started to explain.

"I told you that the people in the upper-middle floor formed a town and gathered, right?"

"Yeah. You did say that."

"There's something like an ongoing conflict within that group. That's why when someone that looks strong like you appears, Swordsman, they're probably concerned that you'll join the other side. Normally, rather than just letting you pass, they'll ask you to join them or often take you with them against your will..."

Rather than that, it meant that they were comfortable with the fact that I was clearly going down to the middle floor.

"That man back there had better sense than you."

I had sated my curiosity and continued to walk forward.

Together with the awkward kid.

"Starting from here, this is the middle floor."

The man who had said that he would guide us but actually followed us to spy on us had already left.

The kid explained that this was the entrance of the middle floor and his face expressed an anxiousness that he didn't have before.

"Really dangerous monsters appear in the middle floor. Plus, there aren't any light stones embedded in the walls... And..."

"Right, I know it's dangerous, so let's hurry and get going."

"...And... starting from the middle floor, if you don't have a guide, you'll never be able to return outside."

"Ok. If it becomes dangerous, protecting you is my top priority."

It seemed like the kid wasn't relieved even after hearing my response.

When I looked at the hesitant kid, I thought.



If I want this kid to guide me to the lowest floor, what should I use to convince him: gems or violence?

It seems like I was leaning towards the latter.

In any case, if I take away the gems, and I want to convince him, it'll inevitably be accompanied by a coercive atmosphere.

Fortunately, the kid started to move before I was finished thinking.

First, he took out and raised a short wand from the large backpack that was strapped onto his back.

And he started to walk forward.

I followed behind the kid and as I went down the middle floor, I could see the remarkably different landscape.

Contrary to the upper passageway that seemed well-built, the middle floor was a dark and uneven underground tunnel.

It was such a narrow tunnel that a single adult could barely pass through it.

"This is way too cramped."

"If you go farther, it'll become wider. Narrow passageways and large clearings show up repeatedly in the middle floor. They each have a different size, and they say that there are some empty lots the size of a town, but there are also passageways so narrow that it's even difficult to crawl."

If the passageway is that small, it'll be a bit uncomfortable.

After he finished talking, he seemed to be tense, trembling with every step.

It seems like this is the first time that this kid has come to the middle floor.

Both his words as well as his behavior indicated this.

Will we really be able to go all the way to the lowest floor?

[Warrior, I have a hunch that that child won't be of much help.]  
Seregia said.

No, it seems like that child will be helpful.

I replied to Seregia.

Honestly, I'm relieved.

Before we got inside the dungeon, I was considering two things while I was bringing the kid.

It was late, but I was thinking about going back to the town and getting a new guide...

Or going into the dungeon alone without a guide.

However, I ultimately discarded the first option because it was a hassle and discarded the second as well because you never know what could happen.

It was truly a relief.

If I came all the way here by myself, I would've had to go back to the town in order to get a different guide.

[It's already been hundreds of years since I became a holy sword, but this kind of feeling is a first. What should I call it? Hm...]

The holy sword muttered in a slightly quiet voice.

[I feel like I'm going to vomit.]

Me too.

[Is that so? I don't feel any different.]

Seregia's like that because she can't consciously spread mana.

It was the special characteristic of this dungeon's middle floor.

The mana that I had spread in order to grasp my surroundings quivered dizzily.

The mana that had been wandering in the air couldn't escape my periphery and dissipated just like that.

I may be jumping to conclusions, but using your mana to survey your surroundings or to find a path is impossible.

And this middle floor is really vast and also narrow; and if that winding path had forked roads like a maze, it would be impossible to get out of here by yourself.

Just like the kid had said.

[Perception Degradation Magic, Mana Diffusion Magic, and it also seems like there's some other types of suppression magic that I'm not familiar with... There are several mixed together. I cannot dispel it with my abilities, and it's also at a level that I cannot grasp its true nature.]

Since the holy sword is going that far and saying that, it seems like it'll be difficult for me to escape this situation on my own.

Fortunately, the kid walking in front of me should have a method for finding the right path.

When the man we had met in the upper-middle floor had heard that we were going to the middle floor, he looked at the kid and noted that he was a guide.

The old lady that I met in the town recommended this kid as a guide to get me to the lowest floor.

This kid definitely has a way to find the right path.

And that way is probably related to the wand he had taken out.

I sorted my thoughts and took out a luminescent stone from my inventory, silently walking and following behind the kid.

It wasn't difficult for me to walk in the darkness, but it's probably difficult for the kid.

I have to at least be considerate of his needs.

Since his senses were outstanding, he could probably walk through the darkness without much trouble, but in this narrow underground tunnel, the walls were thick and rugged, so he could

easily be injured.

The kid was concerned that the light would draw and gather the monsters, but I insisted that it would be ok.

Drawing the monsters with the light was killing two birds with one stone.

Shriek—

While gazing at the beheaded monster's corpse, I asked the kid, "Are all the monsters in the middle floor like this?"

"Yes... well... yes... most of the monsters are at that level..."

What a disappointment.

All the monsters in this dungeon were the type that would hide themselves in the darkness to suddenly burst out and ambush me.

After that, they would just follow their instincts, utilizing their quick and agile movement to use their sharp talons or teeth to attack.

That was it.

Of course, they were really fast and were powerful, but that was it.

I shoved the luminescent stone back into my bag.

If the monsters that lived in the dungeon's middle floor were all just monsters like this, I didn't really want to go so far as to lure them in order to kill them.

[Are you not really satisfied, Warrior? Even though you haven't seen blood in a while? It's hot, fishy, and red blood! Yoo-hoo! Warrior, won't you swing me and use me to fight next time? Yes? I'll even beg you like this. Tee-hee?]

This crazy bastard.

The holy sword is exposing its bloodthirst now.

[It's boring. Now that I've become and started living as a sword, I

wanted to cut down an opponent who knows swordsmanship. Even if they don't know swordsmanship, it would've been nice if they were at least intelligent.]

Seregia's response also wasn't really desirable, but I agreed with her opinion.

The IQ of the monsters here was way too low.

"That monster just now... It's a species called cave clock. If we consider that it's in the middle floor then... it was... a Class 2 risk... This isn't a monster that you can normally kill in one stroke..."

The kid had quickly taken out an illustrated book out of his bag and rummaged through it, and spoke.

Even though the luminescent stone was in my bag.

Considering that he could read the book aloud even though the luminescent stone was off, it seemed like the dark wasn't much of a problem for him.

When you consider the speed of the monster that I had just taken care of, as well as the durability of its hide, it was a really dangerous opponent.

I said this before, but it was just too dumb.

"Where do we have to go next?"

There was a forked road behind the monster's corpse, which was collapsing down onto the floor.

The kid raised his wand in front of the forked road, gripped it tightly, and concentrated.

That's what he did whenever we came across a forked road.

After about five minutes had passed, the kid opened his eyes.

I matched him and opened my eyes.

"It's the left-most path. This way."

It's already been two days and we still haven't been able to get out

of the middle floor.

First, I gave up on drawing a map inside my head using my sense of direction within the first six hours of the first day.

Even if I go back the same direction to the place I was before and followed the forked road, something I'd never seen before would show up.

When I asked the kid, he said that the place was different from the one before.

The location seems the same, but he said that that was the lower floor.

When I asked him why we're going further up, he said that while he was looking for the path that went down, he ended up going up instead.

Then, when I asked why he didn't find that path when we were on the upper floors, he said that there was no crossroad that directly connected to that path on the upper floors.

When I thought about my journey inside the dungeon, I felt tired.

I wasn't physically fatigued, but it was narrow, dark, repetitive, and emitted a strange smell; we also didn't know where we were going and regularly walked in circles, which was mentally draining in itself.

After walking around in circles for two days, I abandoned the map inside my head as well as everything else.

Instead, whenever the kid came across a forked road, I concentrated whenever the kid raised his wand and gathered his focus.

5 forks in the road.

Two of the paths led up, while three led down.

However, that's just the direction of the forked road; you don't

know what way the forked road leads until you actually walk through it.

However, the kid, without being blocked or without hesitation, picked one of the paths of the forked road.

We had stayed in the middle floor for two days, not because the kid couldn't find the path and was wandering around, but because this middle floor was excessively vast.

The kid had said that he had memorized the geography of this place, but that was a lie.

This wasn't at the level you could memorize and go through.

I wonder how you could go through the forked roads without memorization?

You couldn't even spread your mana and look ahead with it.

Did he create a map in his head and pick the right path?

That's impossible.

Is there a sign that only guides can identify for forked roads?

Throughout the two days, I had thoroughly observed for a sign in vain.

Is it simply using decision-making and prediction?

Likewise, that's impossible.

If this kid is using his own knowledge and wisdom in order to find the right path, that's close to predicting the future.

The last thing I could think of was obvious, but it was that wand.

The wand was acting as a navigator.

I have my doubts again here.

If that was the case, then that wand is some sort of magic tool; but how could it find the right path?

This dungeon was characterized by mana obstruction that was

extensively pinning us down.

The kid closed his eyes.

I also closed my eyes.

The kid, in front of the forked road, acted as if he were concentrating and secretly pet the lower part of the wand's handle.

In the next moment, the wand emitted mana.

That mana doesn't spread towards the forked road.

It just roamed about the surrounding area and transiently dissipated.

Just like my mana.

The kid opened his eyes.

I also opened my eyes.

"It's the second path from the right. This way."

The kid stopped walking before the four forked roads without an up or down.

As he had done before, he tightly gripped his wand.

He closed his eyes.

I also closed my eyes.

It wasn't the first one.

It also wasn't the third one.

The fourth one was... a bit ambiguous.

[I have absolutely no idea.]

[It seems like the third one, Warrior.]

It's not the third one.

It doesn't seem like the fourth one either.

It's the second one.



Now, let's see if I've picked the right path.

This kid opened his eyes.

I also opened my eyes.

"It's the second path from the left. This way."

# Chapter 166 - Tutorial 27th Floor (5)

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"This way."

I followed the kid's lead and it soon became three days of wandering around in the middle floor...

Right about now, I was able to make a inference regarding the role of these so called guides.

They can lead you to the right path without depending on their sense of direction, their mana, or magic lamps in this middle floor.

I had thought it was just their top-notch senses and physical abilities, but they had a much more peculiar kind of ability.

When you seek a guide for the middle floor, they'll probably be a strong individual that the client wouldn't easily meet.

It wasn't just this kid; the old lady that I had met in town was also at a level where you couldn't deal with her easily.

That's why these guys are generally of a lower social class.

It's a bit awkward for them to refuse a request outright, and their workplace is extremely dangerous.

In addition, they may be abused in some way once they get inside the dungeon.

Therefore, I thought that this job as a guide was the most dangerous, difficult and dirty; the most extreme of the 3Ds job.

However.

The kid who had been silently walking through the passage stopped.

There was a new forked road in front of him.

Once they had departed the town, passed the entrance of the dungeon, gotten through the upper floor and the upper-middle floor, and reached this middle floor, they gained a greater social

status.

The kid took out a small clock from his chest and checked the time, saying, "It's taken exactly three days."

It's been three days since we've entered the middle floor.

"Yeah."

"There are thousands of people who unfortunately suffer an accident in the dungeons; no, it may actually be tens of thousands. It could also be even more than that."

The kid started talking.

If it were possible, I wish he'd speed up the conversation a bit more.

"However, even amongst them, there's a famous story. Do you know of it? Of the story of the swordmaster Eheram?"

"No."

"I'm talking about the story regarding Eheram, considered the strongest swordmaster of the continent, starving and dying in this dungeon's middle floor. Eheram and a guide had entered this dungeon together, but three days after entering, he argued with his guide."

That was obvious.

I'd really like to skip this conversation, though.

"After their argument, the furious guide left Eheram and exited the dungeon first. They say that when Eheram saw his guide do so, he screamed at him. That he could get out on his own. Eheram was left alone like that in the middle floor and they say that they found his skeleton two years later."

[It's finally time to kill him! Yoo-hoo! Warrior, have you killed a lot of children before?]

[Warrior. My mood is worsening to the point that it's slowly

becoming unbearable. If it's at all possible, could you please put that magic sword on the other side of your waist? I want to be as far as possible from that thing.]

...I got it.

I moved the holy sword, which had been attached to the left side of my waist with the soul sword, to the right side of my waist.

It seemed as if the child thought my actions were dangerous.

"Why don't you go ahead and try to kill me? You won't be able to get out of here without me!" he desperately lashed out.

"It doesn't really matter much if I die here. After all, my life is in the gutters, so dying here isn't very different from dying outside. However, it's different for someone with a lot to lose like you, right, Swordsman?"

I wonder what that kid wants?

More money? The holy sword and the soul sword? If not those, then an apology for the violence from before?

I had already directly and indirectly conveyed my intent to the kid several times.

That if he had something he wanted to just say it.

That if it's proper, I'll just give it to him.

However, that kid's the one who ignored my intent.

"If you're by chance planning to steal my wand, you should just give up. This wand can only be used by my kin. If you're not a person with our kin's blood, this wand won't activate."

Yeah, I'm sure that's how it is.

Since it would only activate by blood offerings, he would prick his finger with the awl at the end of the wand.

I had thought that it would have that kind of condition.

And I could easily guess that the wand had that kind of limitation

when I saw the kid use that wand so confidently in front of me.

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. My blade is crying out!]

[Warrior, please just shove it into the subspace.]

Just as Seregia suggested, I shoved the holy sword into my inventory.

And I raised my hand, spreading my mana.

I briefly observed the dissipating mana.

There were three forked roads in front of my eyes.

The mana that flowed from my fingertips chaotically roamed the air and dissipated.

Before it dissipated, the mana's movement was extremely erratic.

However, after spreading my mana for three days and frequently observing it, I figured out that there was a pattern there.

This middle floor's maze is special.

It had several special points, but the most unique aspect was the mana obstruction magic.

And that this wasn't a spontaneous phenomenon.

Someone was deliberately casting this large-scale magic.

Semi-permanently at that.

The magic's purpose was clear-cut: to make it difficult to find the right path.

However, the right path certainly exists here.

The path that leads to the lowest floor.

Using the few clues I had, I made a deduction about the caster of the magic.

Two speculations were possible.

If it was a spell used in order to imprison someone, then the

caster is in the upper floor; in other words, they must've used their magic from the exit of the dungeon.

In this case, the goal of the magic would be to make it impossible to find the path that leads to the exit.

If so, I just need to spread mana in the direction we came from.

Because we came from the exit.

Since I knew the correct answer, I should be able to figure out the pattern with a few tries.

However, that wasn't it.

The next possible assumption is this:

This magic was being cast from the dungeon's lowest floor in order to prevent you from recklessly entering the dungeon's lowest floor.

When I think about this stage's mission about the Earth Dragon and the Earth Dragon's treasure, the second assumption is much more plausible.

It was a large-scale magic that obstructed the path towards the dragon's lair.

It's entirely possible.

If, based on my second assumption, this obstruction magic's goal is to block my way to the lowest floor...

Then I had to add an additional assumption here.

In what manner did the caster of the magic cast it?

It wasn't easy to disperse the mana within a specific area with magic.

No, it's impossible.

In casting magic, the most important things are the conditions and the medium.

When the kid was walking, he had suddenly said that starting here was the middle floor.

He had also said that the middle floor's terrain consisted of narrow passageways and clearings.

The passageway's ceiling, walls, floor, and from the front... The fact that there was a mana obstruction effect...

And the limitation on the technique known as magic...

If I substitute in those few conditions, I could easily tell what the caster of the magic is using as a medium.

It's the passageway.

And even amongst all those forked roads, the right path.

In the deepest depths of the dungeon, he was using the passageway leading straight to the exit of the dungeon as a medium.

The passageway that acts as the medium spreads throughout the middle floor and exerts its influence.

I spread my mana once again.

Due to the force that was pulling at my mana from all directions, my mana loomed in the air here and there and disappeared.

However, the pulling force was coming from a strange place.

But it was impossible to grasp the direction it was in.

Because the mana dissipated instantaneously.

However, this second dissipating mana was different.

I memorized the pattern of the dissipating mana and I willed my mana into that shape.

The pulling force pulled, but I added my strength and pulled back harder.

The mana thread was pulled on both ends and easily snapped.

However, if only one side pulled, it would simply move to one side.

I pulled the mana that was facing the first passageway, but it dissipated.

The first passageway is the correct answer.

[I have absolutely no idea.]

This way of manipulating mana with your hands would be impossible for Seregia.

The holy sword that I had shoved and discarded into my inventory also wouldn't be able to do it.

In a short time, I had observed the pattern, and I had to memorize that pattern.

And you'd have to subtly manipulate your mana according to that erratic-looking pattern.

Finally, you'd have to grasp where the mana is going in that split second before your mana dissipates.

If you weren't an extremely exceptional magician, it would be difficult to do.

Though I could do it.

"About this wand. Our ancestors invented this wand..."

The kid was still describing the wand.

He was explaining its value and it seemed like he wanted to seize the initiative.

Just like before, he still didn't tell me what he wanted.

"You spread your mana, and you read the pattern in the split second of your mana dissipating. It's probably like some kind of calculator."

It wasn't hard to guess the wand's function.



Just by looking at the exterior, I could tell that wand had only two abilities.

It just spreads mana into the air.

And then it would film the sight of that mana dissipating.

That was all.

The mana would randomly roam in the air and dissipate; the sight was extremely erratic and chaotic.

It would change that irregularity into a pattern.

And it would compare it to all of the patterns that were built into the wand and tell you the right answer.

I wasn't completely sure, but the likelihood of it was over 70%.

It was an efficient magic tool.

Honestly, the abilities in and of itself aren't bad.

Because filming the volatile movement of mana was difficult.

I don't know who it was, but whoever invented that was probably at the level of an Archmage.

"Get out of the way. And don't block my path."

I shoved aside the kid who seemed flustered and went inside the first passageway.

"W-Without me, you won't be able to find the right path!" the kid yelled, following behind me.

"I found it, didn't I?"

"That's impossible..."

The kid followed behind me and mumbled.

The kid had followed me, confident that I would never be able to find the right path.

However, I had repeatedly chosen the right path five times; his face paled about half way through.

[Are you just going to leave him like that?]

Yeah.

[Wouldn't it be better to dispose of him?]

It's fine. There's no need.

I don't think I need to kill him just because he became useless.

In any case, that kid wouldn't be able to leave here alive, so I didn't need to get blood on my hands.

The kid continued to follow behind me.

The kid probably couldn't help it as well.

The kid couldn't deal with the monsters in this middle floor that hid their bodies and lived in the darkness.

There were also dangerous individuals who lived in the upper-middle floor and wanted sacrifices.

If he didn't have someone to protect him, they would take everything he had and capture him.

Therefore, the kid had no choice other than to follow me.

Even now, when he is seized by the fear that I could turn around at any time and kill him because he had threatened me.

The kid couldn't separate himself from me.

It was quite unfortunate.

"Just a moment... Swordsman. Please just wait a moment."

Even while panting because he couldn't keep up with me.

The kid couldn't afford to lag behind.

"Please... Please. Please let me live, Swordsman."

They're words that I had heard some time ago.

Just a little while ago.

"... Swordsman. Swordsman."

His voice sounded as if it was echoing, so he must've been quite far behind me.

"The gems. I'll return the gems as well as the bag! I'll give you everything that I have!"

The kid stopped walking and started shouting after me.

Rather than following me and convincing me, he stayed in place to catch his breath and yelled at me. He might've been trying to get me to stop walking.

"I-If I'm capable of doing it, I'll do anything! Swordsman! Please!"

[How unfortunate.]

What is?

[Humans.]

That's not what I think.

Behind my back, the kid's cries shifted from anger to desperation.

He was so far away that he couldn't even see my back and it seemed like he had sunk into a panic; he was just spitting out any words he could muster.

He was cursing me, and he was also cursing the world too.

As I listened to those words, I could understand why the kid was so obsessed with money and why he was so greedy.

He was considerably unfortunate to the point of being interesting and had a long story, but he wasn't able to stop me from walking.

"Swordsman, I'm actually a girl!"

This time, I had no choice but to stop my stride.

Because it was so absurd.

What exactly do you want me to do?

"I know!"

I yelled behind me and started walking again.

I knew that she wore a bandana, cut her hair short, wore male attire, deliberately changed her voice to sound like a man, used her dirtiness and her smelliness in order to hide her pretty face; I knew she was afraid of revealing that she was a woman.

From the day that I first met her.

However, does that really matter?

I asked myself.

It didn't matter at all.

The only thing that mattered right now was that there was an Earth Dragon waiting for me in the lowest floor.

The word “earth worm” wasn't another name for a worm.

There's no such worm in any novel that can use this kind of high-rank magic.

The one occupying the bottom of this dungeon was a dragon.

I continued to walk forward as my heart fluttered.

# Chapter 167 - Tutorial 27th Floor (6)

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[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. This will be the start of a new legend of the holy sword as well as the title of Dragon Slayer!]

What are you going on about?

"If I kill the dragon, the Dragon Slayer title is mine. Why do you get that title?"

[That's because my blade will pierce the dragon's heart!]

"Nope. I'm not going to use you."

The holy sword radiated and threw a tantrum.

He wanted me to use him to kill the dragon.

[Warrior, could you please just shove that thing back into the subspace?]

[...]

Seregia said, and the holy sword returned to being quiet.

The holy sword really hated entering the inventory, so whenever someone said anything about putting him inside of it, he'd immediately behave himself.

I honestly had no plans of taking out the holy sword from my inventory before I parted ways with the guide kid.

But I was concerned that if I just left the holy sword inside my inventory while I was taking care of the dragon, he would whine like there was no tomorrow.

If by chance the holy sword refused to cooperate at an important moment, it would be a huge deal, so if he behaved, I decided to attach and wear him at my waist.

[It's a strange place.] Seregia said.

Like always, her voice was calm and dry. But the more you listened to her, the better you'd get at roughly understanding how

she feels.

"Yeah. The murals are also unusual."

It's been two days since I've parted ways with the kid.

I had passed through the middle floor and reached the lowest floor.

Though I didn't have a guide, I could easily tell that I had escaped the middle floor.

I walked through the middle floor's passageway and was eventually met with a stone gate that blocked the narrow passageway.

It was a thick stone gate, inscribed with a glowing magic circle.

If the holy sword's explanation was correct...

Based on the holy sword's explanation, the gate was a magic door that would open only after you spoke the proper keyword. I just smashed through the gate with pure strength and went in. After that, the dungeon's appearance changed significantly.

Contrary to the middle floor's narrow passageway that went on in the shape of a winding road, the lowest floor consisted of a single clearing.

The lowest floor looked as if it was a giant temple.

I couldn't read most of the writing and the drawings were discolored as well, but I could tell what this place was.

This place was a spot built for worship.

But rather than worshipping a god, it looked as if it were a place to worship a dragon.

That's what I thought when I saw the stone statues of a giant dragon as well as the vague draconic patterns.

I walked through the dragon's temple silently save for the sound of my footsteps and eventually reached the end.

A giant door.

I thought it might be about as high as a ten-story apartment; the giant door was the only thing blocking my advance.

The giant door was engraved with strange words and symbols.

[They're runes.] Seregia said.

"You also know runes? That's surprising."

It was prejudiced, but Seregia didn't look as though she had any expertise in anything other than swordsmanship.

[I remember learning it from the Academy's liberal arts classes.]

"Can you read it?"

[No. I only know that they are runes.]

As always, Seregia responded confidently.

She had given off this impression since a while back, but whenever Seregia believes that she can't do something, something won't work out, or she doesn't have something, and talks about something negative, she responds even more confidently than before.

Is that a characteristic of her speech, or if not, is it some sort of strange masochistic gag?

[Hoo. Hoo. It's obvious that our cute Miss Seregia wouldn't be able to read those words. You don't have to be too hard on yourself, Miss Seregia.]

The holy sword went 'hoo. hoo.' again and started talking.

[... I'm not blaming myself, but you're making me feel bad, so please refrain from calling my name.]

The holy sword ignored Seregia's request and continued.

[Those runes are written in the draconic language.]

"I see. Then can you read it?"

[No. I can also read a few runes, but reading that is impossible. It's not like draconic language is like a kid's coded message, so how could I read it? There probably aren't even ten people on this entire continent who can decipher that message.]

I briefly felt that the holy sword's statement was odd.

Was the draconic language that difficult of a language to understand?

I had heard about the distinctive characteristics of the draconic language from Idy before.

"Is it really that difficult?"

[Yes. Of course.]

"What I heard is that all of the meaning is put in the front in the draconic language; the rest is just an inefficient language that lists unnecessary words. Then, if you just decipher the beginning of those runes, shouldn't you be able to guess its meaning?"

[I don't know who you heard this from, but that someone clearly has absolutely no knowledge of runes. You cannot just thoughtlessly say something like that, Warrior. Magicians will say that you're looking down on them and attack you out of anger for your disrespect.]

Is that so?

The dungeon's path continued on beyond that giant door.

If it's possible, I would just smash through the door and walk in, but I wanted to understand some of its meaning before that.

"Can you at least read a few letters?"

[I might. Even if I know a few runes, the meaning can be completely different so there's a high possibility that I will misunderstand it.

[TL Note: He's saying that the words differ in meaning, presumably based on how they're sequenced, spelled, etc.]



How unfortunate.

I smacked my lips and I walked forward to smash apart the door.

[You don't have to blame yourself for not being able to read those runes. It's only natural, sir holy sword, Ahbooboo something or another.]

The quiet Seregia suddenly 'cast' provoke.

[... Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. It's natural, you say? ... Warrior. Could you please give me some time? If you just give me enough time, I can interpret as many of those mere scribbles as you want!]

The holy sword was caught by the provocation.

The effect was tremendous.

"No. It's not a matter of time, but you said that you couldn't read it. Let's just go."

[OH! Please, Warrior! If you give me a chance, I'll be quiet!]

That was a tempting offer.

"Fine. Then I'll give you some time, so stay quiet."

[Yes. Thank you, Warrior. I love you, Warrior. I'm definitely going to decipher that draconic language. And I'll show you that I'm worthy of being a holy sword. When I say I'll do something, I definitely follow through. And Miss Seregia, my name isn't Ahbooboo, it's Ahoubuch!]

[I know. Sir mythomania holy sword.]

I ignored the bickering between Seregia and the holy sword, and leaned on a nearby pillar.

Since I had been moving unceasingly for a few days, resting before smashing apart the door wouldn't be such a bad idea.

I have absolutely no idea what was beyond that door.

Enemies may burst out the moment I open the door, so let's move after we've gotten some rest.

It also quieted down the holy sword.

I closed my eyes and briefly passed the time by circulating the mana circuits inside my body.

"Are you still not done?"

[That is... Warrior. If you give me some more time and manpower then...]

Manpower. What manpower?

I drew the holy sword from my waist.

[Warrior! Please! Please don't put me into the inventory!]

As soon as I drew the holy sword from his sheath, he had thought that I was going to put him into my inventory and quickly protested.

I crudely stuck the holy sword into the ground.

"I'll give you 10 more minutes. Finish within that time. Meanwhile, I'll be taking a look around."

After I stuck the holy sword into the ground at a position where it could see the front of the door well, I walked around the clearing as I glanced around.

I couldn't read the letters and the drawings and pieces were extremely damaged, so it was difficult to figure anything out.

But it felt like I was walking through a museum, so it wasn't bad.

In the corner, there were several comic strip-like murals divided into sections.

Likewise, they were considerably damaged, but the more you looked at them, the more you guess the story.

A great dragon fought and defeated an evil enemy.

The dragon that had defeated the enemy had either been cursed or made ill.

The dragon prepared a special ritual.

Before the ritual began, the dragon gave something to a human with a certain pattern.

At the site of the ritual that was taking place, the man waited outside of the door for the dragon.

The human became humans.

Whenever the drawings would change, the humans' faces would change slightly.

The drawing of the humans who waited outside of the door for the dragon continued for hundreds, maybe thousands of times.

The longer it went on, the more their numbers dwindled.

On the final picture on the wall, there was only one person remaining.

[It's an interesting story.]

"Yeah. I'm really curious what the dragon gave to the humans."

What could it have possibly given them that they waited generations for the sleeping dragon?

I wonder what had become of the dragon's consciousness?

Has the dragon not woken up yet, by any chance?

It would be a real disappointment if the floor's objective was to slay a sleeping dragon.

[What do you think happened to the humans? Do you think they grew old and died?]

"Probably not. They probably just don't come over here anymore, even if they're still alive."

[Why do you think that way?]

"Look at that pattern that's drawn on the humans over there. Don't you think you've seen that somewhere before?"

[So it was the guides' symbol.]

It was an interesting story, in more ways than one.

I returned to the front of the stone gate and drew the holy sword.

"Were you able to decipher some of it while I was away?"

[...]

The holy sword just kept silent.

[Sir holy sword sure does keep his promise, considering how he's already silent.]

Even though Seregia's remark was clearly sarcastic, the holy sword didn't retort as I returned him back to his sheath.

I drew the soul sword and enveloped it in aura.

And swung it at the giant stone gate.

Ultimately, even with my strength, I completely failed to break apart the stone gate.

It definitely seems like it's made of stone, but its hardness surpassed that of steel.

I tried a few times, but in the end I had no choice but to give up.

Instead, using my maximally condensed aura, I was able to make a small hole in the gate that I had to narrowly crawl through.

The air was different as soon as I got out of the hole.

The mana density was extremely high.

It felt like I was swimming through water composed of mana.

And beyond the darkness, I sensed a powerful existence.

I felt that the circulation of my mana was blocked due to its magic, and my sight couldn't pierce through the deep darkness.

All I could do was assume who this existence was, based on the power that I felt.

And I was sure.

That was a dragon.

I could say without any hesitation that the only existence that could match up to that is a dragon.

Rather, it was to the point that I was surprised.

Even though it's a dragon, I expected it to be on par with the Demon King or just a little weaker.

That's because the strength that the Demon King exhibited definitely wasn't suitable for the 26th floor difficulty.

However, that was a miscalculation.

That thing exceeds the Demon King's strength.

When I had met the Great Mother, I had witnessed the nearby mana resonating with her.

That was only possible because the Great Mother had complete command over the area.

When I had encountered the Demon King on the 26th floor, I could feel something tremendous beyond the Demon King's physical appearance.

The summoned Demon King would be used as a medium connecting him to his original body's mana in the Demon World beyond.

The Demon King summoned his body's strength and I had felt that considerable power crossing over right before my very eyes.

It was a surprising experience.

And right now, I was experiencing both of those phenomena right now.

The ground underneath and the ambient mana began to shake, and was resonating with the owner of that strength.

And within that owner's body, there was a vessel that existed,

containing that absurd amount of mana.

What's worse was that it pulsed every few seconds and generated new mana.

It was an absurd spectacle.

Every few seconds, it would be freshly supplied with an amount of mana similar to my entire supply of mana.

If you just looked at our mana, you wouldn't even be able to compare the two of us.

Kwang!!

It suddenly roared, accompanied by a cloud of dust and wind surging forth.

And I could feel it.

The dragon had recognized my existence.

Those dragon eyes were looking at me.

My feet stiffened at that truth.

It wasn't fear.

It wasn't from a magical effect.

My brain had just stopped for a second.

At the face of overwhelming strength.

I couldn't find a way to take it down.

In my head, I could see myself repeatedly fail; after that, I could see my death.

That thing isn't something that should appear on the 27th floor.

There's some kind of problem.

[Warrior.]

I heard Seregia.

I instinctively drew and unsheathed the soul sword.

And I raised the holy sword in my left hand.

Although I had decided to refrain from using the holy sword for the sake of my growth, I had to use it in this kind of dangerous situation.

That's why I had continued to carry it from the very beginning.

I thought as I felt its gaze narrow on me.

I couldn't see it, nor could I sense it, but it had turned its body towards me just now.

The first thing I could think of: a magic attack.

When its long-range attack comes, how should I handle it?

"Holy sword."

[Yes. Warrior.]

Contrary to his normal speech, the holy sword spoke both curtly and sharply.

"If a long-distance intangible magic attack comes, for example a restraint, or sleep, or a magic that puts my body into an abnormal state, you can block it, right?"

[I can. So long as the God of the Sky responds, I should be able to block it using holy spells.]

"How much?"

[Twice. Maybe three times.]

That's too few.

"What about ordinary attack magic?"

[I cannot block it at my level. No matter what comes flying, I won't be able to block it.]

So you're saying that I have to evade attack magics and rely on Talaria's Wings.

My preparation against the long-distance attack is too poor.

If that's the case, I have to approach first.

While the dragon is preparing its attack right now, I have to preemptively rush it and win in a short-term battle.

[Indomitable]

[Talaria's Wings]

[Soul Siphon]

[Soul Cry]

[Designate Opponent]

I used all the skills that I could and stepped forward.

At the same time, the dragon roared.

The dragon rushed towards me, accompanied by a deafening roar.

Contrary to what I had expected, it's going to fight me hand-to-hand.

Those conditions aren't bad for me.

I gripped the swords in my hands.

And I too, ran towards the approaching dragon.



# Chapter 168 - Tutorial 27th Floor (7)

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[Roar!]

It felt as though the dragon's harsh cry was reverberating even inside my body.

The dragon and I approached each other at breakneck speed; the distance between the dragon and I was closing quickly.

In an instant, it ripped through the darkness and the dragon revealed itself before my very eyes.

Its body appeared as though it were larger than five meters.

It currently wasn't flying, but those giant, widely-spread wings...

As well as its teeth and its talons looked as big as my body...

Since it's close to me now, I can feel that overwhelming mana more clearly than before.

Its very existence was emitting a powerful intense pressure.

Just looking at it face-to-face made me lose my breath.

I repressed that intense pressure and told the holy sword.

Holy sword, focus on blocking the magic.

[Yes.]

[Blink]

I heard the holy sword reply curtly, unlike usual, and blinked to the back of the dragon's head.

I simultaneously swung the soul sword, cutting the back of the dragon's head as I leaped past.

The sword was enveloped in aura, but the dragon hadn't sustained much damage.

My attack wasn't shallow.

It was just that the dragon's defense was excessively high.

Despite precisely-aimed strikes, it just made a scratch mark on the dragon's hide, rather than cutting through and causing the dragon to bleed.

[Time Confinement]

I organized the outcome in my head.

It had nullified that simple sword strike.

It wasn't as if my aura was completely ineffective.

It was just that the damage inflicted was insignificant.

In order to land a serious attack, it must contain my aura's flames or I have to attempt an even stronger attack.

The former's consumption of my mana and mental strength is huge, and there's too much danger involved in the latter.

Next is the dragon's condition.

I could only observe it with my eyes for a split second, but I had seen everything that I needed to see.

The dragon's condition wasn't normal.

Fortunately.

The dragon's four legs were extremely skinny.

Its muscles looked as if they had shrunk as well.

Its wings' webbing was torn to pieces.

I could easily figure out the reason for that.

It wasn't just the wings; the dragon's entire body was covered in scars.

They were all self-inflicted wounds from its talons.

As the leading expert on self-injury, I was sure those scars were definitely self-inflicted.

Those self-inflicted scars were different in their direction and location than normal self-inflicted scars.

To add to that, I didn't see the pupils of its eyes.

Its pupils were dyed in a cloudy white color.

No matter how I see it, it looks like it's not in the right state of mind.

If the dragon's mind is addled, it wouldn't be able to utilize its spells or mana, so I could understand why it was idiotically charging in like that.

Of course, I can't be positive that the dragon won't use magic.

If it feels like it's in even a little bit in danger, it may start chaotically firing magic at random.

I formulated a plan until my Time Confinement ended.

I tried to predict the dragon's next move, one by one.

I postulated on every type of attack that I could imagine, and considered these situations while factoring in the dragon's speed.

Of course, most of my simulations' results were negative.

However, it was a lot better than what I had thought before the battle.

Just by approaching the dragon this much, my chances of winning were a lot higher than they were before.

I have to end the fight in a short period of time in order to win.

The next thing I had to think about was whether or not I could use the Light Sword.

Could I use the Light Sword the moment that the Time Confinement ends?

I slowly examined my current condition.

It's impossible.

Positioned in the air.

The direction of the attack.

My body is shaken up by my opponent's mana.

Kiri Kiri's warning on the mental strain on my brain.

The alarmingly close distance from the enemy.

Using the Light Sword right away is impossible.

I dismissed the Light Sword and pondered on my choice of attack I'll initiate as soon as my Time Confinement ends.

In that instant, the Time Confinement ended.

[Blink]

As soon as the effects of my Time Confinement were over, I used Blink to avoid the dragon's front legs.

I held onto the holy sword that had been in my left hand in my mouth.

I changed the Thousand Arms sheath that was attached to my waist into a dagger.

[Blink]

I blinked once again.

This time, I aimed for the dragon's neck and bashed into it by casting blink.

The powerful impact was accompanied by a heavy thud sound, as if I were crashing into a wall.

When I had used my blink tackle combo on the waiting room's wall, I had estimated the strength of the impact before using my blink.

I could ignore the impact and move my body.

I pierced the dragon's skin and lodged the dagger in my left hand into the dragon's neck.

I had planned to get up close and pierce a tender region; my dagger ended up lodged about half-way into the dragon's neck.

[Poison]

[TL Note: Was translated as Poison Energy before. That's much too literal and should be translated as poison anyway.]

After the 12th floor, I had consistently practiced the skill; it came in handy here.

It wasn't a skill that was to be used as a finisher, but I had enhanced my sword with the skill and fought several opponents with it before. Therefore, the skill level itself was sufficiently high.

In addition to the poison, I had also added my blazing aura.

Compared to the dragon's huge body, a dagger was nothing more than a needle stuck into its body, but it was different when poison and fire were involved.

If they were to pass through its body, it could obstruct its flow of mana; a critical attack.

Both of the dragon's front legs flew towards me.

[Blink]

[Blink]

I used Blink twice and I once again moved to the back of its head.

I raised the soul sword with both hands and focused on my aura.

I couldn't recklessly use the Light Sword, but I could use imitations of the Light Sword as much as I wanted.

[TL Note: The 'imitations' refer to the techniques with those cringy names that the swordmasters created in an attempt to replicate the Light Sword.]

Amongst them, there was a technique with the grandiose name, Cutting the Sky or Falling Fire's Judgment or whatever.

Even amongst the many techniques, it was the sole technique that stressed explosive power to such a degree.

Since I couldn't sever the dragon's head in one strike, I decided

that striking the back of its head was my best plan of action, so long as I can buy even a split second longer for my next attack.

The technique properly struck the back of its head, and the dragon and I were both shocked by the attack.

Due to the impact, my body momentarily floated into the air.

I focused for my next move.

It was hit with an attack of this severity, so the dragon will start considering the use of magic.

Now, I'd have to move differently based on the dragon's response.

Offensive magic, evasion magic, obstruction magic.

I have no idea how many types of magic the dragon can use.

I also have no idea what magic it uses.

I would just react based on the purpose of that magic, that's all.

And in order to respond to that magic, I would have to predict the dragon's intent.

In a situation where I don't know how many or what kind of cards my opponent has, I have to predict their next move.

What's worse, it wasn't even a human; it was a dragon.

I focused on the dragon's face and muscle movements.

Regardless of what kind of magic the dragon decides on, there will always be telltale signs of its intent.

No matter how tiny they are.

Along with that, I was also tense from the trembling of the ambient mana.

Even though I was close to a beginner at magic, I had to foresee the characteristics of the magical invocation no matter what.

It was unbelievably difficult, but it was something I had to do.

My focus and my thinking speed sped up faster than ever before.

Due to the acceleration of my thoughts, the world slowed down to a speed that could compare to Time Confinement; I tried to guess the dragon's next move.

Despite my attempts, the dragon did something completely preposterous that was outside the realm of my predictions.

The dragon didn't attack, evade, or even restrain me.

It just screamed in agony.

[Shriek!]

I was dumbfounded when I saw the marred dragon clearly exposing its blind spots.

I was locked in confusion and couldn't initiate my next attack.

When I saw the dragon's overly straightforward movements and its dull pupils, I had assumed it, but the dragon had definitely lost its mind.

Contrary to my expectation, the dragon didn't get a hold of itself when danger was approaching, and even after encountering pain, it couldn't formulate a countermeasure.

It just writhed in pain and chased me because I was in its sights.

It swung its human-sized talons and teeth at me with enough force behind its arms and legs that it seemed as though it could break through anything. But its behavior wasn't much different from a housecat chasing around a mosquito.

Although the dragon's close range attacks were backed by a fearsome strength, it wasn't at a level that could threaten me.

Its front legs, as well as its teeth exhibited a simple attack pattern.

Anything that lay in its line of sight was in its aggro.

Its muscles would jerk in order to attack.

The dragon wasn't even aware of its own exposed blind spot and just mustered all its strength to move its body.

Because of that, no matter how strong or fast its attacks were, I could predict the course of its attacks in advance, and calmly avoid them.

It wasn't hard.

Pure strength can lead to different outcomes based on how you use it.

Based on how you use your strength, the result can differ; the results branch off into an infinite number of outcomes.

And far from using magic or mana, the dragon demonstrated an intellect worse than a neighborhood mutt's, so there was no way that it would be my match.

Henceforth, what was progressing wasn't a battle, but a one-sided hunt.

I dodged its attacks and whenever there was a gap, I would stab it with my soul sword.

I didn't really need to put myself in danger to get in a damaging strike.

My sword strikes were enveloped in poison and flames, so whenever I hit the mark, the dragon would cry out and worsen its own injuries by thrashing about.

Ultimately, the dragon couldn't bear the exhaustion created by its uncontrolled movements, plus the poison and the flames, and collapsed to the ground.

For a short while, the dragon was gasping intermittently, but eventually stopped moving completely.

I sighed.

How empty.



I had such high expectations as I progressed through the 27th floor.

When I had first saw the dragon, it had demonstrated strength beyond my imagination.

However, it couldn't properly wield that strength and died like... this.

It was such a hollow ending that it was sad.

Only when the matter came to an end was I able to properly examine the dragon.

At the time, the situation had felt seriously dangerous; the dragon had so wildly dashed in, so I hadn't been able to properly examine it.

However, the dragon's condition was a little strange, to say the least.

"Ahbooboo. Do you know a bit about dragons?"

[It's Ahoubuch, Warrior. If it's truly difficult for you to remember, please just call me the holy sword. Since becoming a holy sword, I have encountered a dragon about twice before, but to see one in that state, it's a first. Even for me.]

So that's how it is, huh.

The dragon's appearance certainly looked strange.

Despite it being my first time inspecting a dragon, it was so strange that I could easily discern that peculiarity.

Its body was far longer than a few meters, decorated with red spots as well as discolored black spots; sometimes, there were sections where the skin would be flaking off, revealing bone.

Of course, there were several wounds caused by my attacks, but even if we exclude those, the dragon had already been on the verge of death.

As its flesh burned, a foul stench emanated from the smoke coming from its body.

I had become used to the foul smell of poisoned and burnt corpses.

However, the foul stench that came from the dragon wasn't like that.

Was it because of the curse that I had seen on the murals?

In any case, the dragon hadn't been in its normal condition.

This did fit the stage's high difficulty.

Since it looked like the main process of this stage was to win over a guide, and reach the lowest floor, there was definitely more to this.

Rather than a battle like this, sometimes the stage focused on a different aspect. I believed that the 27th floor was also one of those stages, so there wasn't anything strange with the difficulty.

It just seemed a little empty.

That overwhelming presence that I had felt when I first came inside this room...

I had definitely felt like I might die, and in each moment I had strived to make the best decisions.

However, the dragon was worse than I had expected.

I think I knew why the clear condition message clearly specified that it was an earthworm.

It was too low-level to be called a dragon.

"Maybe I should've given it an elixir and fought it after it'd recovered a bit."

[Warrior. I don't believe that an elixir would be able to solve the problem that even the dragon hadn't been able to solve.]

Seregia interrupted.

That's what I think too.

I'm just saying that because I'm disappointed.

In any case, I defeated the dragon that had already been half dead. The only thing left to clear was to acquire the treasure.

The clear conditions clearly stated to defeat the earth dragon and acquire the earth dragon's treasure.

Yeah... it'll probably take a quite a bit of time to find it.

As always, the magic in the dungeon was anarchic.

So long as I couldn't use my mana to search my surroundings, I would have to go around and search for it manually.

The clearing I'm in right now is considerably vast. No. It looked ridiculously huge, and I also saw dark crossroads; who knows how far those crossroads would continue on for.

Perhaps I'll have to search the entire floor, including the room with the exit.

I didn't even know what exactly the earthworm's 'treasure' was.

The lowest floor was boundless.

Around the 11th floor or so, I had received a mission where I had to find a hidden treasure in an underground city.

It felt like I would be trapped inside that underground city forever. Needless to say, I had wandered around in there for a long time.

Ultimately though, I broke down a wall and found a secret room in a fit of anger.

If I have to find a hidden treasure again like that time...

I pondered briefly before explaining the situation to Seregia and the holy sword.

And I asked the holy sword if he could find something similar to a treasure with his magic.

[It would be difficult. I can't really do anything about the mana obstruction magic in this room. Also, Warrior.]

"Yeah?"

[Are you sure that that treasure is in the lowest floor? Based on what you said, Warrior, you don't know where the treasure is, right?]

After the holy sword spoke, I was momentarily silent.

What if the its treasure was outside?

That was actually a little better.

That's because I can just interrogate anyone who might have the treasure. Interrogate roughly, that is.

For example, that old guide lady.

However, if it were somewhere in the middle floor, the upper-middle floor, or the upper floor...

How would I find it?

I'm screwed.

I had been so focused on the dragon that I had completely forgotten about the treasure.

First, I decided to search the lowest floor meticulously.

If I look for it and can't find it at all, I can just use the Order of Vigilance to look for corresponding information on the lowest floor, so there was no reason to be overly anxious.

Since the beginning, the Order of Vigilance was involved in helping with the rankers' clears.

I have to use them at times like this.

I took out a magical stone lantern from my inventory and slowly looked around the lowest floor.

There were talon scratch marks here and there on what

remained of the walls and the floor.

They were from the dragon's talons, of course.

"Anyhow, why did the dragon become like that? Based on the murals, I know that it was afflicted with some sort of curse or poison. But is it possible for a dragon to lapse into such an incurable idiotic monster?"

The murals had also depicted a time when the dragon had been wise, governing the humans under its command.

If that's the case, then it means it suddenly changed like that after the battle with that black being.

[Aren't stories of frenzied dragons fairly common?]

A frenzied dragon?

"No, that's the first time I've heard about it. Please explain it to me."

Seregia explained.

[It's not a special story. It's a story commonly passed down orally. A dragon that had lived for thousands of years went insane due to a certain reason. Each person has their own theory, but if there's a common denominator, it's that the dragon didn't stop rampaging until it died. Most stories speak of an ancient empire that couldn't stop the dragon's rampage and fell or they speak of an entire race being wiped out.]

After hearing Seregia's explanation, I interpreted it as something that could happen occasionally; however, a dragon going mad was still uncommon.

"A mad dragon, huh... Then are there any stories of people successfully defeating a frenzied dragon?"

[No. There aren't any. As it destroyed everything in its sight, it would exhaust itself, weaken, and die. It's a common ending.]

Weaken and die?

Then while it's running amok, you're basically saying that you have no other choice besides running away.

"Is that so? Then is this guy too weak to be called a dragon?"

[I'm sorry?]

"Well, that's because at its level, I would've stopped it regardless."

[I'm sorry?]

[Pardon?]

"What?"

Seregia and the holy sword both expressed their doubt.

I played along.

"I mean, it was becoming a bit stale. When I realized that that guy was dumb, I didn't really feel like he was much of a threat to me anymore. That's why it felt a little empty."

[... From start to finish, I thought that it was very dangerous. In the first place, a dragon that isn't frenzied isn't a being that mere humans can mess with.]

[Hoo. Hoo. As expected, you're truly the warrior that I, the holy sword Ahoubuch, chose. I love you, Warrior.]

The holy sword once again said something that gave me goosebumps.

I ignored him and asked a question.

"Holy sword. Do you have any guesses as to why the dragon turned out like that?"

[There are a few causes that could make a dragon go crazy, but in this case, it's probably a curse. Considering how the dragon couldn't treat it, there are two possibilities.]

The holy sword started its explanation.

Unlike usual, Seregia and I quietly listened to the holy sword's

explanation.

[First, there's a chance that it was the type of curse that was impossible to purge. I've heard about it before, but if it's the type of curse that parasitizes the host's mana, then the dragon's immense mana could have been used to poison it. If not, then it could be the type of curse that suppresses one's mana. In this case, other people need to treat you, but not just anyone can treat that kind of curse.]

Surprisingly, the holy sword had a broad knowledge of curses.

And come to think of it, I hadn't thought about learning magic from the holy sword.

I do need offensive spells, but after I possess the knowledge regarding seals and curses, my highest priority will be having a defense against them.

I'll try to learn it when I have the time.

[The other case is that it was a curse that the dragon itself couldn't treat.]

"Is that possible? Aren't dragons normally at the pinnacle of magic?"

Of course, it wasn't exactly information that I had personally witnessed.

It's normally like that.

[There are the gods.]

Ah. That's right.

I had forgotten about the gods.

[If the dragon's enemy drawn on the murals was an evil god, it's entirely possible.]

It was an interesting story.

The gods that were watching the Tutorial.

They were the gods that were watching me, even at this very

moment.

If such gods existed, they would clearly make their presence known to the world.

In the 16th floor and 26th floor, there were people who had talked about the gods.

And I had also heard about the consequences of the gods' intervention in those worlds.

The stories that the knight on the 16th floor had told me and the holy sword that the God of the Sky had gifted mankind on the 26th floor fit in perfectly.

If that's the case, there's a possibility that that dragon had attacked a god as well.

Since it was a matter that couldn't be found on Earth, I hadn't thought about the possibility of a god being the attacker.

And inside this Tutorial, the gods' range of activity was significantly limited.

All they could do was use messages to relay their feelings and intent to the challengers, and exhibit their power.

To me, the gods' existence still seemed like a mirage in a far-off place; it felt as though they were unknown beings that I could never reach in my lifetime.

That's something I need to change.

I have a goal.

As soon as I've achieved my goal, and if the gods deny it...

Then I'll have to try to convince them, or bend down to their will.

As absurd as I felt thinking about it, it was also a task that was just as hard.

However, it's a task I've promised myself to do, as well as



something I had to do for my own sake.

Thus, in order to fulfill my goal, I can't just remain as an infinitesimally small existence before the gods.

[The God of Slowness is pleased.]

[The God of Adventure is rooting for you.]

[The God of Dueling is staying silent.]

[The God of Death is rubbing his eyelids.]

[The God of the Sky is feeling uncomfortable.]

[The God of Devotion feels sorry for you.]

[The God of Nature thinks you're foolish.]

The messages before my eyes passed by quickly.

Aside from the gods that I see often, there were even some gods that I had only seen a few times.

The total sum of those messages was 100.

[All the Gods of the Temple of a Hundred Gods are watching you.]

I won't be able to think to myself, jeez.

Most of the gods had negative reactions.

Those that expressed a positive reaction were only a small minority.

The God of Chaos for example, or the God of Amusement sent reactions. They were, for the most part, gods who enjoyed ridiculous situations.

Then there's the God of Adventure and the God of Slowness.

Are these guys ok?

If you look at it a certain way, I had essentially promised to fight against the gods' will, yet they were cheering me on.

[The God of Adventure is clenching his fists.]

[The God of Slowness is embarrassed about someone.]

Subsequently, I couldn't help but giggle.

That old man sure doesn't change.

He really doesn't change.

After about four hours had passed since I started searching the lowest floor, Seregia asked.

[I'm sorry, but Warrior. Could you please give more details on the explanation you were presented with? We're lacking too many clues. There won't be an end if we keep searching like this.]

After she asked, I revealed all the information that had been presented to me.

[Ultimately, we don't have any information regarding the dragon's treasure.]

"Yeah. That was all the guidance it gave me to find it."

[If there are so few clues, let's inversely use the lack of information as a clue.]

"How?"

[One of the two conditions: if you defeat the dragon, you should be able to naturally find the dragon's treasure. If that's true, then the treasure should be close to the dragon's body. For example, it could be the dragon's corpse itself. Above all, it's a dragon's corpse.]

[A dragon heart! Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. I, the holy sword Ahoubuch, who received the blessing of a god, have figured out the answer. A dragon's most valuable treasure is a dragon's heart! It's a dragon heart. This earth-shattering reasoning! Wow... though I'm a holy sword, I'm so extraordinary, aren't I?]

"No. You just said out loud what Seregia had already figured out."

[No that's not it, Warrior. I figured it out first. I was just late

because I sorted my thoughts first and then spoke. Really. Please trust me. If you deduct the time I took confirming my hypothesis, I had figured it out more than an hour ago. Miss Seregia? You also think that way, don't you, Miss Seregia?]

[First, please check if the treasure truly is the dragon heart. Warrior.]

Seregia sharply ignored the holy sword's remark.

Just like she said, I returned to the area with the dragon's corpse.

I approached the dragon's belly as it lay unmoving on its side...

When I got closer, the corpse's foul stench began to hit my nose...

I thought I had seen it all, yet even I felt as though I was going to vomit a little.

I felt nauseous.

My nose was congested with the foul stench.

When you think about my skills corresponding to my senses like Paralysis Resistance and Poison Resistance, it's really unbelievable.

The source of this foul smell is probably the curse that the dragon was afflicted with.

Rather than a simple foul odor, there's a high chance that the corpse is still afflicted with magic.

Whatever the case, at least in this instance, I was thankful that my sense of smell was impaired.

It was good to know that my sense of smell had been moderately paralyzed.

In the meantime, I drew the soul sword to gut it.

[Warrior.]

"What?"

[The great holy sword, Sir Ahbooboo said that he wanted to cut

through the dragon and gain the title of Dragon Slayer. Although the dragon's already dead, you should at least give him the opportunity now.]

In conclusion, use the holy sword instead of her to butcher the dragon.

I thought about it briefly, sheathed the soul sword, and drew the holy sword instead.

[Warrior! Please just wait a moment. Just a moment.]

The holy sword frantically tried to stop me, but I ignored him and stabbed the dragon's chest.

"Ugh!"

I ignored the holy sword's screams and continued butchering it.

The gutting took longer than I thought it would.

I had actually vomited twice and the holy sword whined over and over again. By the time that the holy sword started to beg, I was able to take out the heart from the dragon's chest.

# Chapter 169 - Tutorial 27th Floor (8)

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[Blech.]

Please refrain from making such nauseating sounds. I feel like I'm going to vomit again.

I endured it without saying anything out loud, and instead muttered inwardly.

The holy sword was sufficiently tormented in the process of extracting the dragon's heart.

The holy sword, retching a few more times, said.

[I'll go inside and rest a little bit.]

"Where are you going?"

[My room.]

The holy sword turned silent towards the end of his reply.

There's a room inside of the sword?

Is there by any chance a bathroom inside as well?

It wasn't just the holy sword, Seregia was also grumbling and making sounds.

"Were you really that nauseous?"

[No, it's not that. I'm just... I'm feeling a bit strange. I think it's because of the battle before. I feel as though my feelings and eccentricities have been enhanced after becoming a sword.]

The feeling of becoming a sword.

Seregia's already a sword.

Seregia probably calmed down as she returned to her calm voice and said.

[Warrior, is that it?]

After she said that, I looked directly at the dragon's heart.

It was a red shade overall, but I could see numerous black spots on the heart.

The heart seemed to be as big as an armful, had an intense foul stench, and radiated with an ominous energy.

The cause of the dragon corpse's foul smell seemed to be this heart.

Just being close to the heart would give you a feeling of disgust.

That's why I was standing pretty far away from the heart right now.

However, the clear condition definitely stated that I had to acquire the earth dragon's treasure.

If that heart is the earth dragon's treasure, I have to obtain it.

However, what's the criteria for acquiring it?

Do I have to put that dirty, unpleasant, and foul-smelling heart into my arms?

I really don't want to.

At that time, a message appeared.

[Tutorial, Hell Difficulty, 27th floor, cleared.]

[All status effects and injuries are healed.]

[You have received 5000 points for clearing the floor.]

[You have received 5000 points for being the first to clear the floor.]

[Many gods react positively to you. You have received 6000 points.]

[Many gods react negatively to you. 3300 points have been deducted.]

[All the gods of the Temple of a Hundred Gods are watching you.]

[You have received an additional 2200 points.]

What a relief.

If that dragon heart wasn't the earth dragon's treasure, I would've had to search every nook and cranny of the dungeon.

"It seems like that's the right one."

[Then what do we do now?]

"We've done everything we needed to do. We just need to take this and return," I said, as I looked at the magic circle beneath my feet.

Seregia summed up this phenomenon simply.

[That's convenient.]

I was glad she accepted it so easily so I wouldn't have to explain the tutorial system to her.

If she became curious, this would've become much more troublesome.

I can't truthfully explain it to her due to the system's restraints, so I would've had to make something up.

And I would've had to continue to play along with my lie.

[Warrior, then what are you going to do with that?]

Seregia spoke without hands or even a face, but I could easily tell what she was referring to.

She was referring to the female kid guide who was crawling through the hole in the stone gate.

I had cleaned up all the monsters on the way here from the middle floor, opening a safe path for that kid.

[Let's kill her before going.]

"Do we really need to?"

[I don't feel like that child will trouble us in the future. However, you don't really have a reason not to kill her. She can also be a

stain on your reputation in the future. Please finish this up and then go.]

"It's fine. Let's just go."

I cleaned the bloodstains on the holy sword and stood atop the portal.

I was about to transport, but then I heard Seregia.

[That child is lucky.]

"What?"

[There's the dragon's corpse. If she takes just a few of those scales, she'll be able to make a fortune. If she somehow gets out, she'll be able to live without ever worrying about money ever again.]

Or on the contrary, she may be met with disaster because of those scales.

Well, whatever.

Whether that kid leads a wealthy life from now on.

Or dies without being able to escape the dungeon.

Or is killed by other people outside.

Regardless of what this kid's story is henceforth.

It didn't matter.

I reaffirmed my indifference towards that kid once more, and teleported through the portal.

"Blech. The smell."

I was transported to the field, and Kiri Kiri covered her nose as soon as I encountered her.

Kiri Kiri had been scribbling something on the floor, and stretched her hand in front of me.

A cozy warm wind blew from her palm.



I felt the lingering foul stench and the ominous energy vanish.

"Thanks. If it had remained any longer, I was going to vomit again."

"Heng. I hate this stage. It's always like this," Kiri Kiri said, pouting.

It seems like I had cleared the stage through a tried and true method.

The words "it's always like this" meant that the other challengers had also extracted the dead dragon's heart.

"But it's actually not like that."

"Could you explain it to me in more detail?"

"In how much detail?" Kiri Kiri said, sitting down in her spot.

I followed suit and sat down as well.

As I sat down, I felt a certain emptiness at my waist; the holy sword and the soul sword which were strapped to my belt had disappeared.

They should be inside my inventory.

The holy sword is probably going to complain about something again.

I responded to Kiri Kiri's question.

"Just what's necessary for the person behind me to tackle the stage."

"Honestly, you can just leave that kind of thing to me. Because that's my role. Hooooujae, you don't really need the advice. I'm not giving you much information, but I'll give the person after you, Hooooujae, as much advice as I can."

That's true. Giving people advice about the stages is Kiri Kiri's role.

She was also happy to do her job.

But she may have thought of it as me overstepping my authority here.

"Nope. It's nothing like that."

"It's because I want to prepare for my growth in the stages ahead. Also, the more advice, the better."

After Kiri Kiri listened to me, she placed her finger at her cheek with a thoughtful look..

"First, you have to pick the right guide. There are several guides in the town. In order to request a guide, you have to improve your reputation within the town by doing this and that in order to gain the guide's trust."

"But there wasn't anything like that for me?"

"That's because you frightened the first guide, Hooooujae."

I think I understand what she's talking about.

The old lady that I met in the town said that I was a monster and she had no interest in taking a stroll with me before running away.

"The guide that accompanied you was honestly the worst, Hooooujae."

She was the worst?

I had thought that she was lacking in various ways.

"Then... The other guides won't threaten you in the dungeon or be covetous of the challenger's possessions?"

"They will."

Then they're no different from the worst.

"The degree at which they do is different though. They're a bit smarter and you can talk to them. When you've passed the upper floor and upper-middle floor, they're also more useful. You have to win over the guide in the town that way. In the middle floor, you have to convince the guide once more. The guide is quite finicky so

they won't go down to the lowest floor. You have to offer them the right price, or threaten them with force."

So it wasn't easy after all.

If the challenger doesn't figure out how to find the right path in the dungeon, then the guide obtains the position of power.

It shouldn't be easy to convince them.

As the kid guide was fine with us both dying together if she were in a pinch.

"Then what about when you're in the lowest floor?"

"If you go all the way there with your guide, everything's pretty much been taken care of, so I don't think I really need to explain that."

I see.

That's because you can just progress the same way I did if you reached the lowest floor on your own without a guide.

"In return, if you progress without a guide like you did, Hooooujae, you'd have to find the right path yourself, defeat the dragon, have a high poison resistance and paralysis resistance, as well as a fear resistance skill."

If it's possible, you should go together with a guide.

I could advise the next challenger, Lee Hyung Jin to raise his resistance skills, but I don't think he'd actually be able to raise his resistances.

It's hard for people to raise their resistance skills.

Even more than I had thought.

I had roughly sated my curiosity for the 27th floor.

Now it was time to ask about other things.

"Heng. You can't, though."

I ignored Kiri Kiri and asked my question.

"Tell me a method of increasing the difficulty of progression in the next floor stage."

I want an even higher difficulty.

I want an even more dangerous and more difficult trial.

I want more death and more danger.

I had felt that danger from encountering the dragon and it may have been because the fight had ended so hollowly, but I felt a greater sense of yearning than before.

In order to run up against difficulty like that, I needed specific conditions.

For example, like how I had provoked the summoned Demon King on the 26th floor, inducing him into using his full strength.

Kiri Kiri sighed rather than reply.

"You can't. There'll be an accident that way. You're not supposed to recklessly use those methods. For example, if you made a mistake on the 27th floor, the dungeon could end up collapsing on top of you. If that happens, even you would be helplessly crushed to death, Hooooujae."

"The stage's setting, the dungeon, can also collapse?"

"It can. Don't think about randomly raising the difficulty level. If you go up the floors, clearing will naturally become tougher. Be patient."

It was disappointing, but I decided to accept it.

Aside from the difficulty, there could actually be an accident that I can't avoid.

More importantly, this was the first time that Kiri Kiri refused to give me any information.

I didn't have to endure danger to the point that I ignored her

advice.

"Don't worry. The next stage will be difficult even for you, Hoooooujae."

I wonder.

That's because I've heard that more than once or twice and I've been disappointed with the stage's difficulty.

After I had listened to all her advice regarding the stage, I decided to take a nap in the field; it was something I hadn't done in a long time.

Kiri Kiri had continuously advised me to rest and it had been a really long time since I'd had proper sleep.

I laid a mat onto the floor and laid down.

The instant I was about to close my eyes, messages appeared.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: What are up to? Are you busy?]

I was about to sleep.

Though I wasn't busy.

[Lee Ho Jae, 28th floor: I'm not busy.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: So you've already gotten to the 28th floor. I remember a few days ago that you were on the 25th floor, though.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 28th floor: Yeah. What? Is something wrong?]

I responded curtly.

In response, Kim Min Hyuk said that there were no problems, but there were things he wanted to talk to me about.

Honestly, what would Kim Min Hyuk have to talk to me about?

He would just tell me about this and that and how they're progressing.

In any case, it's because I also hold a key position in the Order of

Vigilance.

Kim Min Hyuk told me about how they were communicating with the Korean government.

Whatever the Order of Vigilance or challengers wanted to say could be communicated through the challengers that had cleared the tutorial and gotten outside.

However, relaying what the outside wanted to say to the inside was extremely difficult.

The sole method was relaying messages to the newly entering challengers, but these new challengers would be selected randomly.

Ultimately, they would have to broadcast those messages nationwide.

In order for all the people in Korea to know.

However, in this scenario, there's no way to relay the type of information that the public cannot know.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: Therefore, we're making secret codes. But we also can't have someone who doesn't know the secret codes figuring them out. It's quite tricky.]

Even so, it wasn't an area I could help them with.

I just continued to listen to Kim Min Hyuk's complaints.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: We also thought of a way to send messages to a small amount of people.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 28th floor: How? You never know who or when they'll be summoned.]

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: We'll send the message to a few people, and pray that they'll be summoned.]

You should really pray diligently then.

Amongst the population of 50 million Koreans, only 100 people

are summoned per round.

Even if you roughly think about it, the chances of the designated individual being summoned are 500,000:1.

Adding a few more people won't change the odds much.

I yawned while thinking that.

Since I had suffered insomnia on the stage, I hadn't been able to sleep properly, but I could get a good night's sleep for at least a few hours on this field.

Right when I closed my eyes, I felt tired.

As soon as I felt drowsy, I couldn't see the messages properly.

No, even though I saw them with my eyes, I couldn't comprehend the contents of the messages.

[Kim Min Hyuk, 30th floor: ... This round is almost over too. First, if we gather more information from the next round newbies, we should be able to hear about the supermen that appeared in China...]

I suppressed my sleepiness, and saw the messages, but then I had a thought.

That this had become a conversation that didn't really concern me.

The latest in the community were noisy regarding this subject.

They wanted to know about their lives following their clear and going outside.

They predicted that they'd be used as test subjects in labs, or be used as human weapons in the army, or that they'd become heroes in a world where monsters were causing chaos, or that they'd become the hope of humanity, or they even thought that they'd become a new race of mankind.

There were truly countless stories.

That's because whenever the challengers had time to spare, they would talk about that subject.

However, I had felt like it had nothing to do with me.

I had secretly wanted the Tutorial to go on forever.

Even if I did go outside, I didn't want to be labeled a monster and live in solitude.

I wouldn't have any goals or any stimulation, and I didn't want to live a dry life until the day I died of old age.

Of course, my thoughts had changed now and I had a goal I wanted to achieve once I got out of the Tutorial.

However, that goal wasn't limited to just outside the Tutorial, Korea, or even the Earth.

I thought I was a little strange when I thought that.

"Kiri Kiri."

"...Uh, yeah?"

I called Kiri Kiri, who was sitting atop the mat.

It seemed as though Kiri Kiri was thinking of something else, as she responded a bit late to my voice.

"Kiri Kiri, you can press the message window, right?"

"Yeah. I can, why?"

"Then could you talk to him a little bit for me?"

"How?"

"Just say 'I see'. Yeah. Oh. Right. I understand. Do as you please. It's fine if you just respond like that."

"... Is that ok?"

Kiri Kiri's round eyes rolled around here and there, speaking with a anxious expression.

"It's fine. I usually respond like that anyway. Then, I'm counting



on you."

Towards the end, I closed my eyes.

As soon as I closed my eyes, I quickly fell asleep from the surging deluge of exhaustion.

Whenever I woke up from a nap in Kiri Kiri's field, I would usually awaken due to her head; she would be sleeping with her head on my stomach, using it as a pillow.

However, it was a little different today.

I heard a strange laughter and woke up.

"Hehehe."

Hehehe?

It felt strange and as soon as I opened my eyes, I saw Kiri Kiri.

My hand had been raised in the air, and Kiri Kiri was about to press the "confirm" button on the message in the air.

And the message window, no. I also saw the reason for the cake set floating in the auction window.

"Kiri Kiri."

The beaming Kiri Kiri stopped immediately.

Kiri Kiri briefly stiffened like a stone statue, quietly closed the auction window, and put my hand down to the floor.

And she sat down like nothing had happened.

She briefly stayed still like that.

Then she scampered away and started to run away somewhere.

I sighed as I saw Kiri Kiri quickly get far away and stood up.

I had at least rested for a bit, so it was now time for me to get a move on.

[22nd round, 26th day. 2:20]

# Chapter 170 - Tutorial 60th Floor (13)

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"Is the work going well?"

I opened the laboratory door and said.

"No. I feel like I'm dying. Save me."

My clone bastard was making a fuss over nothing.

"It's not nothing, you know. You damn main body bastard."

While watching the grumbling clone bastard, I clicked my tongue and sat down.

The analysis of the authorities that the clone bastard gained on the 61st floor was at its peak.

Though it was something I'd done several times before, analyzing authorities always brought new challenges.

An authority is the implementation of one's will through divinity, which is the essence of one's identity, by a being who acquired godhood with their own power.

It honestly wasn't much different from magic.

Perhaps the gods don't think that there's a difference between magic and authorities.

They would use the 'power of miracles' known as mana, and unleash their will onto the world.

Their divine power is used as a medium to invoke their authorities, which produces miracles; said authorities are determined by their divinity.

While magic is limited by its power, scale, perception, and range, gods' power is limited by their identity.

There are gods that probably use their power without even thinking about it very much, but I couldn't use it as comfortably as them.

I had to thoroughly analyze it, study it, and pass through countless trials and errors before I could barely imitate it.

That's why all the authorities that I use, that were gifted to me by the gods, are all imitations.

Though I could say that they're improved products.

As I continuously used their authorities, I realized the principles behind them.

I realized how my suspicions, the god's divine power, as well as their personal identities were connected.

In this artificially restricted space where time would be repeated and stopped, I watched as the authorities were 'cast' instantaneously and analyzed what kind of process they go through as they're cast.

And I would use that data as a basis to fabricate those authorities.

Through magic.

I was the disciple of several gods, used those authority skills so much that I got sick of them, become sensitive to divine power, had a great understanding of the divine, realized the height of magic, and lastly, had the seed of the divine within me.

If not for those, I wouldn't have been able to attempt it.

But in any case, I'm doing it now.

I had enhanced Blink Orb\* on a previous evening, as well as familiar authorities like Soul Siphon. Now, I was succeeding in improving the authorities that my clone bastard had brought this time, one by one.

[TL Note: Previously translated as Blink Emblem by other translators but should have been translated as Blink Orb.]

But because there were so many authorities that the clone bastard stole, it would take a long time before I could make all of them mine.

But ultimately, it was just a matter of time.

No matter how obscure or complicated the principle was, there weren't any authorities that seemed impossible to analyze and remodel.

"No. About half of them are impossible. I said that it's impossible. You crazy main body bastard."

"Why are you saying it's impossible without even trying? It seems like it'll work."

"If something goes wrong, there are dozens of things that could cause my head to blow up. You call something like that impossible."

"But we can succeed if you overcome the risk of your head blowing up. That's what you call possible."

"You crazy bastard."

While my clone bastard muttered some curses, I halted the activation of the magic circle.

The giant magic circle that had been spread all across the laboratory disappeared.

Considering the scale of the laboratory, how it took a quarter of a day just to walk from one end to the other, the magic circle that my clone bastard had been maintaining was truly huge.

Of course, it wasn't to cast something, but for analysis.

Still, my clone bastard should be feeling extremely exhausted.

"Know-it-all..."

"Then let's rest a bit."

"Oh, really? What's the matter?"

"Since you need sufficient rest to be more efficient."

"So you're saying you'll give me a task that requires high efficiency again, aren't you. You damn main body bastard."

Even while my clone bastard was complaining, he sprawled out onto the floor and prepared to rest.

I saw him take a novel out of the subspace and I too reclined on my chair.

And I opened my message window.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Contact me when you have the time.]

It was such a dry and brief message that I felt as if the existing moisture evaporated.

It seems like she sent me a message like that in order to minimize the interference in my authority analysis.

It's not much of a disturbance, so you can send me a long message if you want.

Is it because of what happened before?

Since I've made some mistakes, I nagged at myself as well.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: I'm resting a bit right now. What's the matter?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: There's new information from the outside. How's your work going?]

That's what I had asked my clone bastard before.

My work is going well.

"No, it's not. It's not going well."

I ignored my clone bastard's voice and continued to send messages.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Of course it's going well. And send longer messages. What do you mean by 'contact me when you have the time'. That's too dry.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: I did it that way because I thought I might get in the way of your work.]

It was the reason that I had anticipated.

I felt bitter for no special reason.

And I felt apologetic.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: You're not getting in the way at all. In fact, I'd appreciate if it you sent me messages more often.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Are you sure? You said you were busy doing something lately.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: It's ok. And am I busy? You're the one who's busy. Is your work going alright? You're not pushing yourself too hard?]

While I could analyze as much as I want, when I want to, as well as rest and play whenever I wanted to, Park Jung Ah was finishing her work on schedule.

Aside from that, she was focused on counseling, coordinating opinions, and even trivial matters, so she was really busy.

Rather, it's to the point where I'm the one who's waiting for her messages more.

After Kim Min Hyuk went outside, it looked like she didn't even have a few hours of spare time a week.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: What's this? Why are you so nice all of a sudden? It's not like you.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: You don't like it?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: No, I like it.]

"You crazy..."

My clone bastard cursed at me.

I ignored him.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: I wonder why you're doing this all of a sudden. You wouldn't have contracted a terminal illness; are you having an affair?]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: What do you mean by an affair; there are only the three of us here: Yong Yong, my clone bastard, and me.]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: If a man becomes kind all of a sudden, they say that it's evidence of cheating.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Says who?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: The community.]

She's like that because she learned about dating from books too.

Though I'm no different.

For a short while, I talked to Park Jung Ah about trivial matters.

The conversation had no value to it, but it was a joyous talk nonetheless.

My clone bastard, who was listening beside me, twisted his body around, and when he started to look tormented, Park Jung Ah brought up the main point.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Lee Joon Seok failed to defeat a G-rank monster. To be exact, the information states that before he attacked, Lee Joon Seok declared that the attack was inadvisable and ran away.]

That was unexpected.

"That's a surprise."

My clone bastard thought the same as me.

Right before Lee Joon Seok cleared the Tutorial, he had told me that he was level 201.

Level 100 had been the maximum value in the early phases, and if you compare him to the other Awakened on Earth, there really was a overwhelming gap that existed.

That's why I had been optimistic.

That Lee Joon Seok would be able to defeat it, since Earth's Awakened had already successfully hunted a G-rank monster

before.

So he should've prepared for the attack.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Was it by chance an attack initiated by Lee Joon Seok alone?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: No. Korea, China, and Japan temporarily transferred a considerable amount of Awakened, and the ASEAN and the U.S. became the key members; it was an attack they had prepared for.]

It doesn't seem as though they lacked anything for the attack.

Then what could've been the problem?

They had succeeded in safely subjugating the G-rank monster on the U.S.'s eastern shore.

Back then, the force of rallied Awakened, and the American Navy had taken considerable damage, but had, in any case, successfully taken care of the monster.

Under the assumption that they prepared a similar force, Lee Joon Seok joining them should've raised their chances of success by more than 50%.

And I relayed my thoughts to Park Jung Ah.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Then it makes sense that he cancelled it. A 50% chance of victory isn't very high. And the casualty count wouldn't be low. Wouldn't they consider cancelling the attack and look for the next opportunity with a success rate like that?]

Is that so?

Is it because I think too lightly of danger and sacrifice?

"Obviously, you crazy main body bastard. In that sense, isn't continuously pressuring me into doing a job that doesn't even have a 10% chance of success too much?"

"You wouldn't die from it anyway."



After I had ignored my clone bastard's complaint, I sent a message.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Do you by any chance have any detailed information regarding the attack on the monster at the eastern part of the U.S.?)

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Nope. The only things we know are in the data that was officially published by the press. It didn't convey any detailed information regarding the G-rank monster.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: What about the Academy Line?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: They had the same information that the press had revealed.]

Academy Line.

The Korean government, after the Tutorial had been disclosed, required the entire nation's citizens to train their physical fitness, as well as undergo battle training; at the same time, they had established facilities to train special elites.

The government would sort out the individuals with extraordinary physical abilities and decision-making abilities, and started to train them in preparation for the Tutorial.

Of course, there was no guarantee that the Academy trainees would enter the Tutorial at the right time.

It was much better than standing still and gawking.

Honestly, there are occasionally a few trainees that enter the Tutorial.

These trainees had more information than what was revealed by the press, and they remembered messages that they had to transmit to the challengers within the Tutorial.

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Firstly, we'll use the people who have cleared in this round to relay a message to the outside that we want information regarding the G-rank monster.]

Lee Joon Seok's failure was a really serious issue.

The other people probably thought 'a G-rank Awakened has appeared, so let's try it out once. If not, we can just cancel it.' and had prepared accordingly, but Lee Joon Seok should've been different.

Through the conversations we had before he went outside, Lee Joon Seok had assured me that he'd be able to take on a G-rank monster on his own.

I thought the same.

If we go by the data we've been given regarding the G-rank monster, it was certainly possible.

That Lee Joon Seok had given up on the attack.

I wonder why?

If the data we have isn't true.

If there are far more casualties than we're aware of.

Or perhaps the success of the attack in its entirety is a lie.

How should I determine the danger of the G-rank monster?

There's no standard.

So long as we can't trust our reference point, the last attack, we can't blindly assume the G-rank monster's strength.

I sorted out all my thoughts.

In conclusion, I could only wait until new information came in.

The evidence that Lee Joon Seok had given up on the attack.

Precise data on the G-rank monster.

The information was lacking.

Like always.

After I had finished thinking, I suddenly had a weird feeling.

That Lee Joon Seok, after clearing the Tutorial, had went outside.

And for the news of Lee Joon Seok on the outside to be relayed.  
It was truly a strange feeling.

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: Jung Ah, how old are we again?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: 29.]

[Lee Ho Jae, 60th floor: What? Haven't you also passed thirty now?]

[Park Jung Ah, 90th floor: Since I haven't counted my age after 29, I'm 29.]

What's with that unbelievable stubbornness?

For a while, I chattered with Park Jung Ah through my messages, and eventually closed my message window.

I had finished resting, and looked at my clone bastard.

He was still lying prone on the floor, reading a novel.

"Aren't you going to work?"

"Let's just rest a little more. No, can't we just rest for the entire day?"

So you really don't want to work.

"It's not that I don't want to work, I really feel like I'm going to die."

He was laying on the floor, and spoke while swinging his legs around.

I clicked my tongue, seeing him lie on the floor and speak while swinging his legs around.

"I told you to do some magic training. At this rate, Yong Yong will catch up to you."

"I don't really care if he catches up to me, you know. Yong Yong

isn't as cold-hearted as you, so even if he becomes stronger than me, he'll take care of me well."

I didn't believe a single word of what my clone just said.

Really.

The phrase, 'desire to improve myself' was always extremely important to me.

I fundamentally liked to improve myself through my own efforts.

And I can't stand falling behind others.

Along with that, I really, really hated passing the boring and tedious time without doing any work.

I always had to be doing something or I wouldn't feel satisfied.

My clone bastard's personality was created using mine as the base.

To be exact, it was a personality formed by using my memories inside of the Tutorial.

He should obviously be doing his utmost to train, as he doesn't know much about the world outside the Tutorial, and only holds intense memories from within the Tutorial.

Despite that, the reason he doesn't want to improve is clear.

He must think it'll have an adverse reaction to his development.

Regardless of how important you regard the desire to improve, or how your personality develops, if someone else coerces you and pressures you to do so...

As soon as you're born at that.

You'd have no choice but to have an adverse reaction to it.

"I'll go call Yong Yong. Since it's already dinnertime. Let's eat together."

My clone bastard said, and as I watched his back, I once again had

mixed feelings.

With an apology.

I don't know why I'm remembering so many memories that I feel sorry about today.

My clone bastard who had been walking along paused, and turned his head towards me.

"Why. What. You got something to say?"

I'd thought after closing the link, but it seems like my emotions had leaked out.

"If not, then whatever."

He once again turned his back on me and started walking; I spoke to his back.

If I don't say it now, I felt like I wouldn't be able to say it in the future.

"I was sorry about what happened before."

He had been walking, yet stopped.

His back was still, yet he couldn't help but turn his attention towards me.

I felt embarrassed so I touched my chin or my nose for no special reason.

The brief silence continued on, and soon I heard his responding voice.

"As long as you know, it's fine."

As he opened the lab door and walked out, he added one more thing.

"Your apology's way too late. You damn bastard, Ho Jae."

And he left, closing the door with a thud.

My embarrassment wouldn't end.

I hadn't felt anything like displeasure or fury from him before he'd closed the door and left.

Rather, his feelings were warmer and brighter.

My embarrassment really wouldn't fade.

I pondered briefly and I sent this through telepathy.

[Thanks.]

He was my younger sibling, something that the protagonist of a fantasy novel yearned for.

Lee Ho Chi quickly sent a message back.

[I'm really feeling goosebumps here, so stop it.]

# Chapter 171 - Tutorial 30th Floor (1)

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[Round 24, Day 29. 3:30]

"Heng. It was tough this time, wasn't it?" Kiri Kiri asked, as she smiled beamingly, and I couldn't help but nod.

It certainly was difficult.

Though they weren't at my desired level of difficulty, the 28th and 29th floors had certainly been difficult.

Especially the 29th floor.

My reputation had risen abruptly.

If I hadn't earned the people's trust enough to hear the information that the underground force was going to perform an act of terror on the city's marketplace, I may have had to challenge the stage more than once, taking several rounds.

I had been tied down in the 29th floor for a whole round, but on the contrary, it was fortunate that I had been able to clear it within only one round.

"So about what I was talking about before, the combat difficulty."

"No, that's..."

Kiri Kiri had been talking ecstatically, but she suddenly paused.

I wondered why, and I waited briefly.

Kiri Kiri looked at me seriously and said, "Hooooujae, you already know what kind of floor the next one is, right?"

Of course I do.

The 30th floor.

It was the first residential district that existed within the Tutorial.

It was different from the stages that repeated every round, or

even the waiting rooms, that were maintained by a powerful preservation magic.

They weren't connected to time; regardless of the number of people, or the organization of said people in the waiting room, it was a space where you could rest when you wanted, play when you wanted, and meet people when you wanted.

Of course, it had a different meaning for me.

I'm alone anyway.

The residential district wasn't much different from a large waiting room to me.

"That's not it."

"What do you mean?"

"It doesn't have a healing function, restoration also doesn't work, and there's also no protective wall."

"Is that a huge difference?"

"It's a big difference."

I thought she would say some pointless wordplay, but Kiri Kiri looked quite serious.

"Hoooooujae, you've mostly done your training in the waiting room. Of course, you also grew a lot during combat, but that foundation came from your training in the waiting room."

"That's true."

If it weren't for my training, my concentration, and my preparation in the waiting room before entering a stage, it would've been difficult to exhibit a sufficient performance or growth.

"Also, the waiting room is an innocuous space. Since no matter what you do, you won't get hurt, and nothing will be broken. If you're hurt by an excessive impact, or the walls collapse, they'll



also be restored."

I nodded my head once again.

"It's such a different environment. It differs based on the individual to what extent your body feels that, but your mind is different. Most people definitely recognize the difference in their mind, and through that, they're able to influence their subconscious mind."

"For example, by you using your body more excessively than usual."

"So that's how it is."

It was just as Kiri Kiri said.

You could see it if you took a look at my training that I had invested the most time into, or even my self-injury.

Of course, even if you consider my self-injury as a part of my training, there would be a question remaining of 'are you ok', but... let's say that it's training.

If it weren't the waiting room, would I have been able to self-injure myself every day like that?

Regardless of how much I needed it, or how much I preferred that method, I wouldn't have been able to self-harm myself so frequently.

Because my body would sustain damage.

"In conclusion, I'm saying that you shouldn't just rest for a few days and immediately rush to the 31st floor."

Yeah...

Honestly, after this round ended, and the next round started, I had decided to immediately enter the 31st floor.

I couldn't anticipate any improvements on my specs through level ups anymore, and as the combat difficulty of the stages went

down, I wouldn't be able to anticipate my growth in battle either.

The only thing remaining was for me to go up the stages as quickly as possible, and encounter greater difficulties.

That's also how Kiri Kiri had advised me.

"However, it's not often for you to get an opportunity to take a major step forward through just training."

A major step forward, huh.

It'll be that effective just training on the 30th floor?

Why would training have such an effect in a space that isn't even the waiting room?

I had sometimes trained in stages where I had already acquired safety and I needed to kill time.

"Stages are also different. Especially you, Hooooujae, since your body changes whenever you leave the stage."

"Are you talking about my insomnia?"

"A little of this and that, including that too."

I briefly pondered, and ultimately decided to follow Kiri Kiri's advice.

I usually didn't lose out by listening to Kiri Kiri.

Though it did happen occasionally.

"It doesn't!"

"What do you mean 'it doesn't'."

Kiri Kiri may have saddened from my statement as she went 'hmph' and turned her head.

For some reason, I started laughing at the sight.

I laughed, stood up, and approached the portal.

"Finally, if I were to tell you one last thing, you have to rest a bit."

"I got it. I'll make sure to rest properly."

"And don't do it half-heartedly. Think about it as training too, and force yourself to rest."

"I got it. I got it."

After I finished responding, I stood atop the portal.

As soon as I waved my hand, Kiri Kiri scampered around and said her goodbyes, telling me to take care.

Soon, I was transported to the 30th floor from Kiri Kiri's field.

[Welcome to the 30th floor residential district.]

The message was accompanied with a full view of the 30th floor.

The 30th floor residential district had also been the setting for the first competition.

It definitely looked identical to what I'd seen before.

There was a square in the middle, surrounded by a line of wooden buildings.

I wonder how many buildings there are?

Even if I were to make a low estimate, there should be more than hundreds of them.

I was certainly well-aware of how the residential district was structured.

At the time of the competition, I had experienced it firsthand, and I also read the community's explanatory articles.

Certain buildings should be lodgings, while others should be restaurants.

Even amongst these buildings, they had separate uses.

They even had a cafe, a pub, a playground, and even a casino.

It was truly a town.

However, to me, it was no different from the waiting room.

On the contrary, it was worse.

There wasn't anyone here besides me anyway.

I sighed, and started walking to decide my lodging.

I felt hungry.

In general, whenever a stage ended, my hunger would automatically settle when I entered a waiting room, so I wasn't often pestered by hunger.

However, I had spent an entire round within the previous floor, and had been transported to the residential district, not the waiting room; thus, my hunger hadn't settled.

As soon as I find my accommodations, I should eat something.

Is there any beef jerky left?

[Oh... I was really scared, Warrior.]

"If you pout one more time, I'm going to shove you into my inventory."

I stopped the holy sword from making his frightened appeal in his cutest way.

The holy sword felt that it was unfair, but who cares.

[You know how scary going into the inventory can be.]

What do you want me to do about it?

Whenever I go to Kiri Kiri's field, you're automatically stored into my inventory.

"What about Seregia? Were you also scared by any chance, Seregia?"

[No.]

She answered promptly.

It also sounded like she snorted at the end there.

It was definitely a ridicule-filled snort towards someone.

"Seregia, are you feeling better now? You seemed really unwell back there."

[Yes. I'm alright. And I was alright back there as well.]

Whenever there was a battle recently, Seregia became a bit weird.

Though she was usually curt and didn't speak much, she became really quiet after a battle.

She becomes firmer and sharper.

I'm not talking about the tone of her voice, but her will.

It was to the point that I, the wielder, could feel it; the sharp will within her.

And considering those times, it seems like she's losing her humanity.

Well, she seems to like her current condition, so I'm not sure if I should be worried about her.

I didn't have to walk for very long and went inside the closest building.

There was a table with chairs spread around it on the 1st floor.

It was a space where you could sit and rest.

I went up to the 2nd floor.

I opened the closest door and went inside.

There was a small desk to the side and a bed right next to the window.

It was a small room.

It was the same as the room I had stayed in during the competition.

"What should I do now?"

[I agree with the advice that you heard, Warrior. First, please

rest.]

"Do you really think I need the rest?"

[Yes. You really do need it.]

After the holy sword spoke, I asked for an explanation.

[First off, it's your bodily condition, Warrior.]

"My body's fine. My fatigue has also gone away for the most part."

[No. I'm talking about your continuously maintained tense state. I have no idea what will happen if you completely release all your tension. Truthfully, the amount of time a person can maintain a tense state is at most a few days. However, you haven't released that tension even once, Warrior. At least, after you acquired me.]

He had a point.

It was unlike him.

Even in the completely safe waiting room, as well as Kiri Kiri's field, I hadn't ever completely released my tension.

That's because I need to concentrate in order to clear the next stage.

However, if I were to completely release my tension while I have this chance to rest...

[Next, it's regarding your 'level', Warrior.]

[T/N: His level of strength. Not his Tutorial level or stage.]

"Level?"

That was unexpected.

What does rest have to with my level?

[If I'm completely honest, your level changes case-by-case. It's not to the point where I can see it going up and down, but I see it abruptly go up to the next level.]

"I'm hearing that as you saying that I'm a half-wit who can't even manage his own power."

[Yes. That's exactly what I'm... not saying, but I'm saying that that's how amazing you are, Warrior! Ha. Ha. Haha. I love you, Warrior.]

I wish he would stop saying that he loves me over and over again.

[From my point of view, it seems to me that your problem is that your body cannot keep up with your own skill, Warrior. Since you haven't given your body the time to adapt to your skill and you've been continuously growing until now. Of course, during that time, your body should have also felt that process of growth, and had grown accordingly, but that's only when talking about normal people. When you get to this strength, it is important for your body to become accustomed to even a single leap of growth.]

He had a point this time too.

If we just exclude that it came out of the holy sword's mouth, it was extremely useful advice.

Kiri Kiri and the holy sword.

Both of my trusted advisers had recommended that I rest.

Unreasonably going to the 31st floor from here would probably be overdoing it.

I want to immediately leave here, but I restrained myself by thinking of it as another sort of training.

I chattered with Park Jung Ah and Kim Min Hyuk a bit, and read the surplus community articles.

I guess I'll meditate if I get bored.

With that in mind, I decided to rest for a few days.

"Also, teach me some magic."

[I don't want to.]

"...Why?"

He spoke so firmly that for an instant I thought the holy sword was Seregia.

[My position becomes uncertain.]

"If you don't teach me magic, your position will become really solid. You'll definitely be able to reflect on your solid position from within my inventory."

[I'll teach you.]

After my consultation with the holy sword, I decided to rest for three days accompanied by study in magic theory.

So after I feel as though I've rested aplenty, my schedule would be one day of rest, one day of magic study, and one day of swordsmanship training in that order; and I decided to stay here for around one round, maybe even two.

I drew up a chart of my daily schedule as if I were a elementary school student.

My schedule was mostly filled with rest, taking walks, meditating, or chatting (messages) and I tried my very best to follow it to the letter.

Even on the days I had to train in magic, my training didn't surpass three hours.

It was a boring everyday life to the point that I felt impatient, but it was effective.

It had been one week since I'd entered the residential district.

And then there was an unexpected change.

[Your level has been adjusted.]

[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv. 101

I had been at level 56 and had suddenly shot up to level 101.



# Chapter 172 - Tutorial 30th Floor (2)

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[Lee Ho Jae (Human)]

Lv. 101

What is this?

Is it like when you level up after spending a night at an inn in an RPG?

No. That's not possible.

It wasn't as if I hadn't rested at all this entire time.

Like Kiri Kiri and the holy sword had said, my body hadn't been able to keep up with my achievements; by resting, my body had become able to get used to them.

I heard I needed rest, but I didn't know that it'd have this kind of effect.

I expected my focus to improve with enough sleep, but I hadn't expected my level to shoot up by about 50 levels.

On that note.

"I'm completely abandoning my schedule."

[I'm sorry? Shouldn't you rest a bit more? You only rested for about a week.]

"I'm going to rest more."

[Yes?]

"I'm just going to rest for the entire week. No more magic or swordsmanship training in the middle. I'm just going to eat, sleep, and play for the entire day."

[Isn't... that too excessive?]

The holy sword tried to dissuade me, but my mind was made up.

Since I had figured out that rest was this effective, I decided that

I'd rest for the entire week without doing anything.

If I drastically increase my level this way, maybe I'll be able to receive level up rewards again.

I may not level up from resting anymore, but there's also a possibility that it could increase further.

I'll rest lazily for one or two days, and then I'll be able to confirm whether it's true or not. I wanted to see if my level would increase more if I rested properly for a week.

If it didn't, I can just start training again after a week passes.

[I'm concerned that you'll become dull if all you do is rest for a week, Warrior.]

"Not a chance."

Seregia said something about me becoming useless or whatever. I quickly denied it and dove into my bed.

Starting now, I'm not going to move a step from my bed!

Until I really need to use the restroom.

[Pain Resistance Lv. 6 has been acquired.]

[Mental Pollution Immunity Lv. 5 has been acquired.]

In terms of results, resting for a week was a complete failure.

My level didn't change a bit.

Instead, my Pain Resistance and Mental Pollution Immunity skills leveled up.

I hadn't self-injured myself while resting either.

I had only rested all day. The boredom and the restlessness really took a toll on my willpower; the psychological agony was practically torture as my body writhed atop the bed, so my skills leveled up.

I knew myself well; even as I rested for a week, I felt like I was

being lazy, or that there was nothing to do. That's just how sincere I was about resting.

After resting for a week, I felt as though I had been buried by that tranquility.

It sounded like the second hand of a nonexistent clock rang out, and it felt like the ceiling would collapse on top of me at any moment; I felt an uneasiness that had no basis.

The entire time I spent on top of my bed felt like torture.

It seemed as though Seregia and the holy sword realized that both my body and mind were exhausted, so they tried to convince me to start training again; but I thought of this as training too, and endured.

And today, the week-long rest ended.

As soon as morning came, I happily got down from my bed and went straight to making a new schedule.

[Mind power\* is ultimately no different from magic. Don't they say that extremes meet? Normally, when a young superman reaches a certain level, he'll be able to easily master both magic and swordsmanship. It was the same for me as well.]

[TL Note: I had absolutely no idea what the author had written in Korean, but I looked it up. I believe it's a word used in Tai Chi and means "yinian". It's likely a word often used in wuxia novels rather than Korean novels. It can roughly be translated as intent/will and mind power as well. It's what lets you use your chi/inner energy. The author mentioned that Ho Jae felt like his "life force" (chi) may have been drained from using the Light Sword before, so...]

"Then, you're saying that I should focus on swordsmanship first?"

[Yes. You don't really need to learn magic right now. Swordsmanship is the best. More importantly, isn't it cool? Why

do you want to learn something that those tottering magicians mutter in their small rooms?]

[You can say that again. Swordsmanship really is the best. Please hone your swordsmanship first, Warrior.]

Seregia ended up being persuaded by the holy sword.

"It's not like I'm going to neglect my swordsmanship. But I'm finally able to study magic. I was barely able to find a magic book that specifies runes."

As soon as I had cleared the 29th floor, I got Kiri Kiri's help and bought magic books.

In large quantities.

[That's not it. I'm not saying you shouldn't learn magic. But you should focus on your swordsmanship right now.]

"I should focus on my swordsmanship? Why?"

The holy sword wasn't saying that I should prioritize my swordsmanship; he was saying that I had to train my swordsmanship at this time.

I asked for a detailed reason.

[You are still unskilled in using your mind power, Warrior. It also hasn't been very long since you've genuinely used it. In order to become skilled at using it, you need more practice and effort. Plus, you've recently shown an extraordinary growth rate, Warrior. This kind of opportunity is hard to come by even once in your life. Whether you were blessed by the God of War, or the energy of the universe is focused on you, this unusual acceleration is uncommon. Just as there's a period of growth with your body, there's also a time where you'll experience explosive growth in your swordsmanship. And this period of growth differs between individuals. I'm saying that you never know when it'll end. You don't know when this condition will end, so don't waste time on magic. Please focus on swordsmanship.]

What are you talking about?

I've just been growing normally.

Whether it's the God of War's blessing, or the will of the universe fulfilling my desires, it's not like I've ever heard or seen them before.

[He's correct, Warrior. This is the first time he's said something right, so please listen to what Sir Ahbooboo has to say.]

Seregia assented from my side.

Was she enthusiastically chiming in after understanding what the holy sword had said?

I asked out of curiosity.

[I wasn't paying close attention, so I'm not sure. More importantly, I'll be bored if you decide to train in magic, so please practice swordsmanship.]

It turned out that she was just being faithful to her desires.

Due to the two ego swords' passionate complaints, I decided to change my schedule.

First, I'll polish my swordsmanship a bit, and study magic later.

After I've made some visible progress in the two fields, I'll enter the 31st floor.

That's how my training in the 30th floor residential district began.

"I thought that it was a technique that added magic, though."

I was talking about the technique that the holy sword used on the 26th floor.

I had just slashed downwards, but the cut had gone beyond the field and through the rampart.

[Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. Hoo. That was a technique that I frequently used when I was still human. At the time, I wasn't familiar with magic.

That was when I was at my peak. Ha!]

It seemed like he was going to start boasting again.

"At any rate, explain the basics of it for me. If you don't want to go into the inventory."

[Yes. I'll explain it to you. First, I have to talk about your skills, Warrior. That's because this kind of thing is understood differently based on the individual. When you used your mind power Warrior, how did you do it?]

As the holy sword requested, I drew the soul sword and took a stance.

"Honestly, I never learned this technique in detail. I just imitated it based on the stories that I had been told. I recalled something in my head when I listened to the stories and I just reenacted the same thing."

[Good. Focusing on that image and embodying it is an effective method. However, you were able to successfully figure that out on your own. Plus, you were able to utilize a technique you've never learned before.]

"Next is... It's difficult to explain."

[That's alright. It's naturally difficult to explain.]

"... This is just a speculation. If I were to artificially generate heat and light, I think I would've had to rub the mana together. This way."

I stretched my left palm out and released my mana.

My mana collided with atmospheric mana, and as it shot up, the impact generated heat.

If I released any more mana, the heat would have been accompanied by light.

[You really do all sorts of things. Do you really need to learn magic? You don't use that technique by applying that to your

sword, right?]

"I do apply it to my sword."

[... Please try it.]

I shifted the aura that had formed around the sword.

It was definitely a lot more difficult.

Generating heat around the sword was much more difficult than using friction to form fire using the atmospheric mana.

A sword was a solid medium.

It had much more of a dull, stiff-moving, refined aura.

As the aura moved against my will, the heat generated was far greater.

First, I have to be careful that the energy doesn't build up in my body.

At the same time, in order for the unfolding energy that travels along the sword to go straight forward, the direction of my movements also had to line up.

I weaved together the aura that was spreading everywhere spontaneously, and then the aura is focused onto a single point on the sword's tip at the end of that complex process.

It started from my body, and would flow down through the sword until it ended at the sword's tip; it would continue to collide and the flowing aura which created energy would be released from my control at the tip of the blade.

The energy that was released from the sword's tip wouldn't be in a straight line.

As soon as the energy is released, it will shoot in various directions.

The continuously colliding energy would flow down the sword until it reaches the blade-edge, where it undergoes a diffused

reflection. The sword's fixed power would dissipate, spreading out in every direction.

The energy could shoot out to the side, and could even aim at me, behind the sword.

Ultimately, it was vital that I direct it into a straight line in front of me.

This was the Light Sword's first form, Pierce.

A bright light would glisten upon the sword's tip.

That was the end of it.

I stirred the soul sword around, and waited for the heat to be discharged.

I didn't use the Light Sword at its completed stage.

You could see it as an imitation because it wasn't the founder who used it, but a different swordsman who created it. However, it did contain immense heat.

[... Does that make any sense? All those miniscule particles of aura moving forward? Who was it? The person who told you about such a suicidal technique?]

"No one told me about the technique; I just tried it based on the story that I heard."

The holy sword seemed momentarily dumbfounded, and laughed with a 'ho ho.'

[I don't know what to say. In general, if you attempt that kind of technique without any guidelines or without a conventional method, your body will explode.]

My body did explode, and was followed by a flood of mana.

If it hadn't been in the waiting room, I may have died.

I briefly told the holy sword about my attempts at practicing the Light Sword.



[Even though something like that happened, you ultimately completed the technique. Your tenacity is amazing, so such so that you're absurd. In any case, it's a relief that you didn't die.]

The holy sword said that I couldn't do something so dangerous in the future, stating that a warrior's most important weapon was their body, and began nagging that I needed to be particularly careful with mine.

After he nagged me for a bit, the holy sword taught me his technique.

[It was a technique that I called the Spatial Rift Mind Slash.]

"Did you say the Spatial Rift Mind Slash?"

When I heard the grandiose name, my anticipation rose.

[Of course, it's not a technique that allows you to harm your enemy with just your will. However.]

"However?"

[It doesn't seem that different from the outside. That's the important factor. Hoo. Hoo.]

"Stop laughing and explain it to me quickly."

[Yes. Of course. First, it's important to form the aura around both sides of the sword symmetrically. And the aura follows the sword and goes to the end... no, when you use your soul sword, Warrior, rather than the sword tip, a slightly more distant point would be better. And...]

The holy sword started to explain obediently.

He used similar words and expressions to the ones I used when I used the Light Sword and explained it so it was easy to understand.

He started with a simple outline, gave a description to help with imagining it in my head, told me the pattern that my magic circuits should unfold (as well as the shape of the aura), and the method to achieving it.

When I heard the scrupulous and helpful information, I could understand the technique that the holy sword was describing, contrary to when I had clumsily practiced the Light Sword on my own.

If the key factor for the Light Sword was friction, then the Spatial Rift Mind Slash focused on the compression of mana.

You would compress the mana to its limit; this technique was derived from the basic question: 'what would happen if I continuously suppress the compressed mana?'

The aura would follow both sides of the blade and collide at the tip, where it would be continuously stored.

I failed at directing that power in the direction that I desired previously, but after I maintained the power in its entirety, it would be able to exhibit a tremendous force if I were to hit my target.

For example, if it were to impact a magic barrier, there would be a huge explosion.

It was highly likely that the person using such a technique would also die.

It was a technique that you could call disastrous and filled with holes.

However, when the holy sword attempted this technique, I figured out a new method of application.

The holy sword would maintain the compressed power in the tip of the sword, and I was able to confirm that a piece of the aura protruded forward for a brief instance.

It was smaller than a needle, but it was still aura.

No matter how thin it is, it would cut through bone and steel at a mere touch.

It was an unseeable extension at the blade's tip.

"What do you mean the Spatial Rift Mind Slash? The name has nothing to do with the technique."

[But from the outside, it looks like an invisible sword that passes through space. That's what's important.]

It did look like that.

Since I had just slashed downwards, there hadn't been any sign; yet it had cleanly cut through the distant rampart.

Even I, the wielder, had been astonished; how bad would it have been for other people?

It would look like I had cut the rampart with just my will.

"However, if you consider the amount of willpower or mana that this uses, isn't it too ineffective? Only a small bit of aura is used compared to the amount of aura that's put in."

[That doesn't matter. Aura is aura. Just the fact that it's aura means it has enough power. Of course, there's a lot of mana that's wasted, but because of that mana, they won't be able to detect the Spatial Rift Mind Slash. Therefore, you'll be able to cut through your enemies without them being able to respond.]

This was also a valid point.

I, the wielder, had been surprised by the considerable power contained within the sword, but even I hadn't noticed the slender aura that had actually cut through the rampart.

Though its mana consumption was high, it was much less than that of the Light Sword.

In terms of practicality, it was much better than the Light Sword. I couldn't say anything more.

"It's amazing."

[Of course it is! Who am I? I'm the legendary holy sword that was blessed by the great God of the Sky, Ahoubuch! Hahahaha.]

The holy sword started to boast again.

Rather than listen to that, I decided to use what I had learned and show it to him.

I went in front of the residential district's fountain. Then, I drew and raised the soul sword.

The application of aura wasn't much different from the Light Sword.

On the contrary, it was simpler and easier.

My mana would be refined and shaped into aura according to my will.

I compressed that aura at the edge of the sword.

[From here on, you need to familiarize yourself with the technique, Warrior. You must learn when to project the aura forward.]

Just as the holy sword said, I maintained the aura after compressing it at the tip of the blade.

I didn't just stay still after the blade was covered in aura.

I continuously drew out aura, and pushed it to a single point.

It escaped my control, and the aura burst out; as the aura's power became progressively stronger, its strength continued to become harder and harder to control.

Because of that, the flow of mana began to shake finely.

But at some point, a tiny fraction of the aura protruded forward.

The protruding aura quickly scattered and vanished as it escaped my control.

I somehow succeeded.

It was a split second. And it was only as long as a finger at that.

I had precisely matched my timing and extended the aura, like

when I had swung the holy sword.

To a length that could cut through the distant rampart.

I suddenly realized that the holy sword's level of swordsmanship was far above mine.

[Ho... I didn't think you'd be able to do that on your first attempt. Regardless of how much you explain it, the majority of people can't even attempt it. As expected, you don't have ordinary talent, Warrior. I love you, Warrior.]

[Warrior.]

While the holy sword suddenly began flattering me again, Seregia spoke to me.

[When do you think you'll be able to complete the technique that you used just now?]

"What's with you all of a sudden?"

[I'm just... feeling greedy. I want you to master the technique as quickly as possible and use it.]

What a peculiar greed.

Is that the desire of a swordsman, or the desire of a sword?

To think she wants me to demonstrate the technique as soon as possible.

[Around half a year should be enough time. Since the Warrior's extremely talented, and he's been practicing a similar technique up until now.]

The holy sword explained to Seregia.

What do you mean by half a year?

I don't have any plans on dragging it out for that long.

"One week."

[I'm sorry?]

"I'm going to master it within a week. That way, I'll be able to study magic as well."

## Chapter 173 - Tutorial 30th Floor (3)

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It didn't take a long time before I was familiar with the grandiosely-named technique, Spatial Rift Mind Slash.

Nevertheless, the holy sword's technique was similar to the Light Sword. If you were to quibble over it, it was actually easier to use.

[I still don't understand.]

Seregia spoke sullenly.

While I practiced the Spatial Rift Mind Slash with the soul sword, Seregia was also at my side.

However, it seemed like she was getting disappointed as our understanding of the technique broadened.

"It's not that difficult. I'll explain it simply by comparing it to something else."

Contrary to its grandiose name, the technique was ultimately just a technique that extended the sword's edge by compressing aura.

It was an aura slash that extended so finely that it couldn't be seen by the naked eye, inducing an optical illusion that looked as though you had cut through space.

That's all.

Applying the aura was extremely simple.

You just need to think of it like a swelling, triangular zit.

You would press down on the pustule from both sides, forcing its contents to explode outward.

With a pop.

[What do you mean by a 'pop'?!? Do you really have to explain my lethal technique by comparing it to something so filthy?]

"I'm not wrong, am I?"

I ignored the grumbling holy sword and continued my explanation.

"And the split second that the pustule is fired, you swing your sword. Of course, you need to know exactly when the pustule will be fired, how far you want it to go, and also how to maintain it for a certain amount of time. That's all there is to this technique."

[When you put it that way, Warrior, my technique seems way too mundane, and it also feels filthy. Warrior.]

I explained the method of utilizing the technique and its applications thoroughly to Seregia.

She couldn't try out the technique herself since she didn't have a body anymore, but Seregia's passion for swordsmanship hadn't waned.

On the contrary, her desires were much more transparent than when she was a human. She earnestly wanted to improve her understanding of the technique.

Of course, the holy sword wasn't quite happy that his technique was being analyzed thoroughly in the process of explaining his technique.

He was pretty displeased.

[Then why don't YOU try using that simple technique! Since you've practiced a lot already, why don't you try using it properly! It would be fine if you used it on that house over there, wouldn't it!?!]

The holy sword was pissed.

I may have hurt his pride.

Rather than confront the infuriated holy sword, I decided to do as he said.

I was standing in front of the mountain right now. The distance between me and the building that the holy sword had pointed out



was certainly not small.

Around 150 meters.

I had pulled off the technique successfully many times in the past few days, but I had never tried to use it at this distance.

But whatever.

I didn't think of it as impossible.

I just haven't tried to apply it differently.

It's been five days since I started practicing the technique, and I've already become familiar with it.

I drew my sword and enveloped it in aura.

I felt the aura compress at the tip and briefly waited.

I still couldn't use it at a moment's notice because it needed a bit of time before the reaction I was looking for came.

Eventually, I found a specific pattern in the lump of condensed aura.

I matched the timing based on prior experience and swung my sword.

It followed my diagonal sword swing and a scar carved itself onto the wooden building 150 meters away.

It looked as if it were marked by the talons of a monster that only appeared in legends.

That was satisfying.

[... I-It's still not perfect! Look at that. Aren't the traces of your sword strike too uneven? It's proof that you didn't control your aura properly!]

The holy sword was silent for a short while before he continued to argue.

Just as the holy sword said, the traces of my sword strike were

definitely uneven.

As I said, it looked exactly like a talon mark.

I have to make the traces cleaner and smoother.

"It'll be fine if I practice some more. There are two days left, aren't there?"

I had promised that I would succeed within a week, and there were still two days remaining.

Perhaps that was the reason the holy sword was acting sharp and fastidious.

The holy sword did confidently assure me that I wouldn't be able to completely familiarize myself with the technique within a week.

Disregarding that...

There's something else on my mind.

"Should I try combining it?"

The sword was engulfed with flames.

It still wasn't possible to combine the Spatial Rift Mind Slash and the Light Sword technique.

However, it seemed like simply fusing fire to the aura would be fine.

In that state, I attempted the Spatial Rift Mind Slash again.

Even though it looked similar, it required a different method of control since I had mixed the two techniques. The aura did as it pleased and went wild.

I had to guide that aura to the tip of my sword.

It was more akin to using my strength to roughly shove the aura, rather than using a technique.

And I slashed down with my sword once again.

I had swung my sword at a leisurely pace, yet I heard an

unsettling sound effect emanate from my sword.

And the two-story wooden building in front of me earned another lengthy scar.

If I were to describe the difference between the two slashes, the second one was interspersed with flames.

[This crazy...]

[You're truly amazing. I don't know what else I can say. You're amazing, Warrior.]

The holy sword and Seregia both reviewed it side by side.

Seregia just complimented me like normal.

And the holy sword... it sounded like this asshole was going to cuss at me?

Honestly, it's not a very practical technique.

Using the holy sword's original technique would be much more effective, and smoother.

If I were to add fire, it'd just add more weaknesses.

The aura consumption was also enormous.

More importantly, controlling it wasn't easy.

Seregia and the holy sword hadn't noticed, but the second technique didn't hit my initial target.

And this type of mistake could be fatal during a battle.

However, there was one advantage that offset all those disadvantages.

It looked cool.

Others would see it as a slow sword swing, but it would appear as though my slash had severed a distant object while simultaneously igniting it on fire.

It was pretty good for showing off.

[What are you even going to do by learning magic? Please just learn swordsmanship. If you're also skilled in magic, Warrior, my position is at risk.]

I ignored the holy sword's whining.

The holy sword's position is solid.

Who would dare aim for the position of a frivolous demonic sword?

[What are you going to call that technique?]

The holy sword stopped complaining and finally contributed something.

The technique's name was important.

Once upon a time, I had thought it foolish to name your techniques individually.

Giving them names were like limiting your own potential.

However, as I familiarized myself with the Light Sword technique, my opinion changed.

If you don't hammer in that fixed perception, the technique would be too difficult to even practice.

Attaching names to these techniques was definitely helpful in recalling and exercising the technique.

[How about Spatial Rift Blazing Mind Slash?]

What insincere naming sense.

You just added "blazing" to the original technique name.

And.

"You can't use mind slash."

There wasn't any problem to the holy sword adding the name 'Mind Slash' to his technique.

However, there was definitely a problem adding 'Mind Slash' to

my own technique.

[It's perfectly fine to call it a mind slash. Most people will see it as a mind slash anyway.]

The holy sword advised that I use the name mind slash, but I thought differently.

I wouldn't be able to call this technique 'Mind Slash,' regardless of what others may think or see.

Familiarizing myself with the name 'mind slash' will be detrimental to me later on.

If I wanted to attach 'mind slash' to it, I can't allow my sword strike to be as rugged as the scar on the wooden building.

I would only recognize this as a 'mind slash' when I'm able to precisely cut off a person's head without drawing my sword.

And 'Spatial Rift Blazing Mind Slash,' really?

It's too long, and it's lame.

[Well, if that's what you think.]

Mind slash, huh.

Mind slash.

I sat next to the fountain and thought about a mind slash.

When I saw the technique the holy sword had unleashed on the 26th floor, I had truly felt that it was a mind slash.

And I had attempted it by myself in Kiri Kiri's field.

As a result, the only thing I was able to confirm was that I couldn't even attempt the mind slash yet.

At the time, I thought I could use the mind slash.

I'd succeeded in keeping a calm mind while executing the Light Sword technique.

I had earnestly attempted to use the mind slash.

My method of attempting it was both simple and stupid.

I formed mana in the air.

It was like lifting mana from my palm, like how I had drawn and returned the short sword lodged in the tree.

I condensed the mana midair and moved it.

It wasn't my body nor was it my sword; I projected the mana in the air, and made it solid, forcibly controlling it. At the same time, seeing the movement that was controlled by that force was extremely difficult.

And I swung my sword.

The condensed mana and the sword in my grasp became one.

As I swung my sword slowly, the mana in the air follow the same trajectory.

That's how I materialized my will into the air.

I succeeded in hitting the falling Thousand Arms with my mana.

However, that was all.

All my strength went into it, but I was only able to slightly nudge the free-falling Thousand Arms.

Ultimately, that was all.

However, what if I were to combine it with the holy sword's technique here?

Let's try it.

I gathered aura in my palm.

Forming mana outside the body and forming aura had different levels of difficulty.

On the surface of my palm, aura about the size of my thumb was formed and rose up.

That was enough.

I molded the aura into the shape of a triangle and compressed it at the end of a single point.

It was the same as the holy sword's technique.

I didn't gather the aura at the end of a sword; I just gathered the mana that I had formed in the air.

I momentarily focused my strength at the end of the aura, a slender branch of aura stuck out for a short while.

Even though I was focused, it was difficult for me to see it in a split second.

It wasn't even the length of 1 cm.

[... What did you just do?]

"After I amassed the aura, I used the method of the Spatial Rift Mind Slash to try to project a part of the aura."

[You really do all sorts of things. My goodness.]

[How effective is it, Warrior?]

"I probably won't even be able to kill a sewer rat."

I can't use this.

Even if I were to increase the output from here, it doesn't seem like I'll be able to get a better outcome.

It wasn't a problem with the amount of mana I had, but rather a problem utilizing it.

I pondered about it a bit more.

In order to use brief protrusion of aura from the holy sword's technique, the Spatial Rift Mind Slash, you had to swing your sword.

And if you swing your sword in a large arc, you would be able to quickly slash across a wide range using a small amount of mana.

What would happen if I were to swing the aura in the air towards

the front?

The difficulty is just too high.

I had only removed the sword as a medium, yet its difficulty rises absurdly.

Amassing the aura in the air and using that to mimic the Spatial Rift Mind Slash was too much for me.

After centering the aura on the central axis, I had to match the timing and swing it?

That's impossible.

Extending the aura and swinging it simultaneously was impossible.

I can only do one or the other.

If that's the case, taking out the swing is the right move.

Let's solve the problems preceding the swing.

While the aura's moving diagonally, I'll focus on the essential task of extending the aura.

The further it moves diagonally, the better.

If that's the case, it'd be better to rotate the aura.

I enlarged the aura that floated above my hand a bit more, to about the size of a fist.

And I started to slowly spin it.

As the aura spun, I realized I made an error.

I didn't have a way to condense the aura that rotated in one direction.

In order to project a portion of the aura, you have to pressurize the aura.

However, in order to pressurize the quickly rotating aura, I'd have to concentrate on producing an opposing reaction.



It needed a collision of force.

If it's not clockwise, then let's try counterclockwise.

I dispersed the aura that was above my hand and started over again.

This time, I shaped the aura into a sphere.

The aura within the sphere was divided into three bodies.

The three bodies simultaneously rotated in opposing directions and on slightly different axes, rubbing against each other to emit heat.

Rather than it being the holy sword's Spatial Rift Mind Slash, it was closer to the method of utilizing the Light Sword.

The aura particles used the process of friction to generate heat, and at a single point the collision between particles was maximized, creating pressure. Using that pressure, a piece of aura was momentarily projected.

The friction, as well as the rotation, was running smoothly.

Though, there was one problem.

The rotational speed was continuously accelerating.

I wasn't using my strength sustain the rotation anymore, but I had fastened the sphere onto its central axis so that it wouldn't escape my control; yet the rotational speed was accelerating once again.

There was so much light that it was difficult to open my eyes and look directly at it.

The heat went beyond my palm and started to singe my wrist.

It was like a fist-sized sun.

This is really dangerous, though.

It was like an airplane's engines, ringing out across the residential district.

The intense light tormented my two closed eyes.

[Warrior, stop. Please stop! What is this all of a sudden? If you keep going and that explodes, you'll really die!]

In an instant, the aura transformed into a miniature bomb as the holy sword urgently tried to stop me.

I also wanted to disperse it like the holy sword said, but it wasn't possible.

If that violent energy escapes my control, I have no idea what'll happen.

I didn't know whether it would explode or disseminate in all directions.

However, whatever the result, it would bring about an extremely dangerous situation; that I did know.

The activity of intense thermal energy had created a bomb.

So that I wouldn't be swept by the fierce air current, I held onto the fountain with my left hand and endured.

I could use my mana and stand my ground, but I didn't have any extra mana at my disposal.

[Warrior, you'll really die!]

[Time Confinement]

I used my Time Confinement and temporarily halted time.

It's too late to stop the sphere.

It was impossible to naturally disperse that energy.

In order to destroy the sphere, all its energy has to be used up.

Even within the world that had been stopped by Time Confinement, the white light sphere was slowly spinning.

How fast is that thing spinning?

This is driving me crazy.

I don't know whether that thing will endure the entire duration of Time Confinement.

I repressed my uneasiness and focused on the sphere's movement.

In any case, the sphere was moving slow enough that its spin was apparent to the naked eye.

The chance to calmly look at the slowly-moving aura was really valuable.

The single sphere was composed of three autonomous bodies, and I was able to observe that the three layers were colliding and rubbing against each other.

Its flow.

I watched for quite a long time.

Right before my Time Confinement was over, I counted the numbers.

One.

Two.

Three.

At the same time that I counted three, the effects of Time Confinement ended.

The sphere started to rotate at a rapid pace once again, and the world began to shake.

In the midst of this, I manipulated the sphere.

I had prepared this method and waited for the effects of Time Confinement to come to an end.

And through that method, I was successfully able to pressurize a part of the aura that formed the sphere and project it.

In the next moment, a giant echo was accompanied by a burst of intense light.

It was accompanied by a wave of mana, and I couldn't tell exactly what had happened.

After the burst of light, I felt that the temporarily-projected aura had already dissipated.

Before I had been engulfed by the aftereffect, I had hurriedly used Blink repeatedly to escape the range of its effects.

Because Blink had negated the force that would be applied to my body, I was able to land safely, rather than be swept away and tumble about.

From the direction of the sphere, a thunderous sound belatedly rang out.

Despite being quite far away, I felt the heat strongly.

It was to the point that even I, who had Fire Resistance, felt pain from the heat.

I had expected that the length of the aura that I had projected from the sphere was about 30 centimeters.

However, it rotated and continued to accelerate even further, so as soon as I directed the aura from the sphere, its length was longer than several meters.

And during that brief instance, the giant bulge of aura rotated several hundred times using the sphere as its center, no it rotated several thousands of times.

That was the result.

At the center of the residential district, the entire fountain area was razed to the ground and burning.

Kwang!

I didn't know if the aura that I couldn't collect and lost control of had diffused in all directions, and exploded, but another boom rang out.

A part of the aura had been projected; since an equivalent energy had been consumed, the explosion hadn't been that large.

With that, the sphere had completely disappeared.

I started to analyze the aftermath.

The sphere had rotated repeatedly, and at some point, it increased its revolutions per minute by effectively “grabbing” onto the central axis.

It was difficult to stand my ground in the face of the storm.

The sphere had over-accelerated and its revolutions per minute drastically increased the force of the technique.

In a split second, everything in my vicinity would be torn apart if that technique were to use the aura blade as its center.

Like a blender.

Also, the technique was accompanied by an intense heat and light.

Subsequently, it becomes extremely difficult to maintain the central axis, to the point that I can't deal with it at my level.

Obviously, the ideal path of action would be to use the aura projection to consume as much of the sphere's energy as possible. Then, immediately after using the technique, I have to escape from the blast area.

After using it, the remaining energy in the sphere explodes.

So, if it's possible, after using the technique, it'd be best not to leave too much energy within the sphere.

Thereafter, if there's an excess of energy in the sphere, I have to escape as quickly as possible.

And the only noteworthy thing is that it would end like this.

It had plenty of force and great potential in a wide variety of combat situations.

In conclusion, I have two questions: how do I decrease the excessive force, and how do I control it?

I have to reduce the danger of the technique as well as tame its excessive force.

At my current level, I have no chance of controlling it.

Later, after my skills have progressed further, I'll try it again in the safety of the waiting room.

More importantly, my magic circuits have become a mess; even if I were able to take the risk, I wouldn't be able to attempt it again.

I took out medicine for burns from my inventory and said.

"I think this is enough swordsmanship. Let's study magic starting tomorrow."

[... So if you're a person who can do something like that, why are you trying to learn something like magic?]

[The God of the Sky agrees with someone's opinion.]

[The God of Light is happy.]

[All of the Gods of the Temple of a Hundred Gods are watching you.]

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